

# **The Tennessee State Recreation Plan 2003-2008**

**Phil Bredesen**

*Governor*

**Betsy L. Child**

*Commissioner*

*Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation*

**James H. Fyke**

*Deputy Commissioner*

*Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation*

**Joyce H. Hoyle, CPRP**

*Director*

*Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation*

*Recreation Educational Services Division*

Prepared by:

**Edwin S. Gardner**

*Recreation and Conservation Planner*

and

**The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation**

**Recreation Educational Services Division**

*401 Church Street*

*Nashville, TN 37243-0439*



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**STATE OF TENNESSEE**

**PHIL BREDESEN**  
**GOVERNOR**

Dear Tennessee Citizens:

It is with pleasure that I present the *2003-2008 Tennessee State Recreation Plan*. This five-year Plan identifies relevant issues for guiding and achieving our vision for parks, recreation, and conservation resources now and in the future. The importance of a "seamless system of parks, recreation, and conservation" is strongly reflected throughout this document and one that I enthusiastically support.

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation prepared the Plan with a strong base of public participation and support. The Plan outlines an action program with strategies that will require implementation from all levels of government, the private sector, and statewide organizations.

We have made some progress with land acquisition, development, preservation, and conservation, but we still have many challenges to face. To realize our vision, it will take the support and involvement of all partners throughout Tennessee. What we plan for and protect now will be there for future generations – "As We Plan Our Recreation Future...Let's do it together."

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Bredesen".

Phil Bredesen



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION**  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37242-0435

**PHIL BREDESEN**  
GOVERNOR

**BETSY L. CHILD**  
COMMISSIONER

Dear Citizens of Tennessee:

Commissioner Betsy Child and I are proud to present to you the *2003-2008 Tennessee State Recreation Plan*. Through this Plan, we have taken a significant step toward realizing our vision for Tennessee's future in parks, recreation and conservation. This Plan will serve as a magnet for all recreation providers to join together in establishing a statewide system that benefits all interests, enhances open space and protects sensitive resources. It is our goal to place a significant emphasis on maintaining what we have, while prioritizing the needs of new recreation and park facilities and sites.

This five-year Plan will be a guide in uniting a statewide network toward a mutual effort to provide a better quality of life for all residents and visitors in Tennessee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim".

James H. Fyke  
Deputy Commissioner



James H. Fyke, Deputy Commissioner, Parks & Conservation, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation; Governor Phil Bredeesen; and Betsy L. Child, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation

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*The following material can be found on the CD-ROM attached to the back cover of this plan. Each italicized heading below is a separate file in PDF or Excel format. To open the PDF files, your computer must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. This software can be downloaded at no charge from [www.Adobe.com](http://www.Adobe.com).*

## **4. *Public Recreation Demand Analysis (see 1\_Demand.pdf)***

The Demand Assessment Process

Statewide Recreation Demand

Local Recreation Demand

Public Workshop Input

## **5. *Recreation Supply Analysis (see 2\_Supply.pdf)***

Tennessee's Recreation Land Base

Inventory of Recreation Supply

## **6. *The Public Recreation Infrastructure (see 3\_Infrastructure.pdf)***

Agencies Managing Recreation Resources

Recreation Grants and Technical Assistance

Parks and Recreation Professional Training Programs

## **7. Related Plans and Data:**

*Database of Recreation Resources (see 4\_Resources\_data.xls)*

*Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan (see 5\_Greenways\_plan.pdf)*

*Database of Trails and Greenways (see 6\_Trails\_data.xls)*

*Off-Highway Vehicle Study (see 7\_Off\_highway.pdf)*

# INTRODUCTION

**T**his Plan has been prepared under direction of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Division. The plan proposes a blueprint for action during 2003 - 2008. The purposes of this plan are:

- To assess the current supply of and public demand for the whole range of recreation activities in Tennessee (*see 1\_Demand.pdf and 2\_Supply.pdf*.)
- To identify critical issues relating to recreation opportunities and to conservation of recreation resources,
- To develop a set of policy proposals (the Action Program) aimed at addressing those issues.

In addition, this plan fulfills the requirements of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCF) for a comprehensive state recreation plan. That Act provides grants to the states for outdoor recreation projects. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Division, administers these LWCF grants, as well as grants from the State-funded Local Parks and Recreation Fund. This plan will assist the department in defining priorities for its grant programs.

## Acknowledgements

### Tennessee Conservation Commission

Ron Braam	James H. Fyke, Deputy Commissioner,	Margaret E. Pritchard
John T. Callery	Parks and Conservation	John P. Sheahan
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Environment & Conservation	Bob Keast	Wimp Shoopman
Roy Dale	William H. Morris	William M. Vaughan
	Sam Powell	Gene Washer

### Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee

The planning team is deeply grateful to the members of the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) for their assistance in and ongoing commitment to this planning process. The TRAC was convened by Governor Bredeisen to oversee the development of this 2003 – 2008 Tennessee State Recreation Plan. Its members include:

**Ken Alexander**, KPAC Manager, Paris Civic Center  
**Sam Anderson**, Director, Knoxville Parks & Recreation  
**Lee Barclay**, Field Office Supervisor for Tennessee, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
**Carolyn Bauer**, Outdoor Recreation Planner, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
**Pam Beasley**, Director, City of Germantown Parks & Recreation Department; Chair, National Parks and Recreation Association, Southern Regional Council

**Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee** *(continued)*

**Tonya Blades**, Regional Planner and Community Development Specialist, Greater Nashville Regional Council

**Robert S. Brandt**, Citizen, Author, Outdoorsman

**Marge Davis**, Conservationist

**Nancy Dorman**, Tennessee State Parks Planning Manager, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation

**Austin Fesmire**, Director, City of Athens Parks & Recreation Department

**Nick Fielder**, Director, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Division of Archaeology

**Bobby Fulcher**, Park Manager, Cumberland Trail State Park

**James H. Fyke**, Deputy Commissioner, Parks & Conservation, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation

**Eugene Gillespie**, Johnson City Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

**Ken Givens**, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture

**Herbert Harper**, Director of Historic Commission, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation

**Dan Hawk**, Director of Planning Assistance, Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development

**Joyce Hoyle**, Director, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Division

**Mark I. Ivy**, Associate Professor, Middle Tennessee State University, Recreation & Leisure Services Department

**J. Ralph Jordan**, Resource Specialist, Tennessee Valley Authority, Resource Management & Recreation

**Alan Leiserson**, Legal Services Director/Policy, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Office of General Council

**Margaret Mahery**, Executive Director, Tennessee Municipal League

**Anne Marshall**, PARTAS Manager, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Division

**Gary Myers**, Executive Director, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

**Gerald Nicely**, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Transportation

**John Noel**, Environmentalist

**Mitchell (Mitch) Parks**, Board Member, Tennessee Conservation League

**Nancy Peace**, Director, Area Agency on Aging, Upper Cumberland Development District

**Candi Rawlins**, Executive Director, Tennessee Recreation & Parks Association

**Reggie Reeves**, Director, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Division of Natural Heritage

**Linda Shelton**, Executive Director, Tennessee Department of Health, Governor's Council on Health and Physical Fitness

**Randy Smalley**, Regional Manager of West Tennessee, Division of State Parks, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

**Charlie Tate**, Director of Cultural and Natural Resources, Division of State Parks, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation

**Ann Tidwell**, Board Member, Land Trust for Tennessee

**Fran Wallas**, Attorney, Parks and Recreation, Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, Office of General Counsel

**Susan Whitaker**, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

**John Wilbanks**, Chairman, Governor's Council on Greenways & Trails; Director, Pigeon Forge Parks & Recreation

**Anna Windrow**, Senior Advisor for Legislation & Policy, Governor's Office



**Ocoee River, Hiwassee Scenic River State Park.*****Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Staff*****Joyce Hoyle**, Director**Mark Tummons**, Assistant Director**Anne Marshall**, PARTAS Manager**Mike Baumstark**, Planning Manager**Ella Buntin**, Administrative Manager**Alice Burke**, Grants Manager**Jim Hammontree**, PARTAS Consultant**Gerald Parish**, PARTAS Consultant**Agency acronyms used in this plan*****Federal Agencies:***

<b>COE</b>	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
<b>NPS</b>	National Park Service
<b>TVA</b>	Tennessee Valley Authority
<b>USFS</b>	U.S. Forest Service
<b>USFWS</b>	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

***State Agencies:***

<b>EDC</b>	Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development
<b>TDA</b>	Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry
<b>TDEC</b>	Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
<b>TDEC-RES</b>	TDEC Division of Recreation Educational Services
<b>PARTAS</b>	TDEC-RES Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service
<b>TDOT</b>	Tennessee Department of Transportation
<b>TDTD</b>	Tennessee Department of Tourist Development
<b>TWRA</b>	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency



**Cherokee National Forest**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of this plan are based on an exhaustive and comprehensive body of information about Tennesseans' participation in recreation activities and their concerns about public recreation resource management. The information and public input gathered by the planning team has come from many sources:

- **National Survey of Recreation and Conservation (NSRE).** This ongoing national survey conducted by the U.S. Forest Service includes extensive telephone interviews of 2,100 Tennessee residents and 14,000 residents of the market region of surrounding states. The most recent NSRE survey, from the period 1999-2003, provides a very accurate picture of which recreation activities are attracting the most participants in Tennessee, and which activities have seen the greatest growth in participation since the last NSRE in 1995.
- **Public Workshops.** Over 600 comments from 150 individuals were recorded at 18 public workshops held statewide during 2003. These comments reflect the recreation-related issues that the public is most concerned about, as well as the current demand for specific kinds of recreational resources. The priorities that have emerged from these comments correlate fairly well with the NSRE participation data.
- **Needs Survey of Local Agencies.** A survey asking about recreation needs, concerns, and priorities was sent to local governments all across Tennessee during 2003. Responses were received from 154 local agencies.
- **Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC).** Governor Bredesen appointed 40 individuals to the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) and charged them with leading this planning process and serving as a source of expert advice. The TRAC includes Cabinet-level policy makers and career recreation professionals representing 21 Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as prominent recreation and conservation activists representing six major organizations.
- **Review Process.** Once the plan was drafted, it was posted on the TDEC website, and recreation-related agencies and organizations and the public were invited to submit comments during a 30-day review period. In addition, TDEC held a series of four public review meetings statewide to present the plan and take comments. Overall comments reflected enthusiastic support for the plan, and numerous helpful suggestions were incorporated into the final draft.



Roan Mountain State Park.

## FIVE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

After analyzing the public input and additional information, the TRAC committee and the planning team identified the most critical issues now confronting recreation and conservation in Tennessee. Five primary objectives were defined for addressing these critical issues.

### ***1. Make the most of what we have.***

In a time of budget deficits, the first priority for Tennessee's recreation providers must be to do as much as possible with the resources the state already has. That means using interagency teamwork to find solutions that no agency can achieve alone, giving the public better access to information about existing recreation sites, and seeking ways to let Tennessee's outstanding recreation assets contribute to rural economic development.

### ***2. Set aside recreation resources for the future.***

Rapid population growth and development of open space mean we must act now to preserve additional recreational resources so that future Tennesseans may enjoy the same high quality of life. This proactive posture includes managing growth to help protect our heritage, acquiring prime parcels of land, and giving special attention to greenways and rivers.

### ***3. Ensure consistent quality throughout the Tennessee Recreation System.***

Many federal, state and local parks have not been maintained consistently in the past due to under-funding, and the result can be facilities that no longer meet high quality standards. In addition, there are critical gaps in the supply of recreation opportunities at the local level. Maintaining a high-quality statewide recreation system requires that these needs be addressed.

### ***4. Generate stronger support for conservation and recreation.***

Sustaining a high quality Tennessee Recreation System requires commitment at all levels, from schoolchildren to volunteers to government leaders. Such commitment can only be built through aggressive advocacy to communicate the value of parks and conservation and the need for widespread support.

### ***5. Provide recreation programming to address critical needs.***

Recreation participation is an important component of quality of life, yet far too many residents are not getting access to the recreation they need. Programming can bridge the gap by targeting groups that are being left out.



Metro Nashville Aquatics Center.

## CRITICAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

The section that follows gives an overview of the specific solutions proposed in this Plan's Action Program and the critical issues and realities that each is designed to address.

### *1. Make the most of what we have.*

#### **Organize a seamless “Tennessee Recreation System.”**

- There are five Federal agencies, six State agencies, and hundreds of local governments involved in managing and developing recreation resources in Tennessee.
- The visiting public often doesn't know or care who administers a particular park area.
- The National Park Service is calling on states to encourage collaboration among public and private park and recreation providers at all levels.

#### **Provide more information through printed media and a one-stop recreation website.**

- The number of Americans using the Internet for travel planning increased from about 12 million in

1997 to about 64 million in 2001. Forty-two percent say they now do all or most of their trip planning online.

- The public must currently visit eight different websites to find recreation information about Tennessee.
- Availability of State Parks brochures at Interstate Welcome Centers is currently limited.
- The public needs a state map showing all State and Federal and major local recreation lands in Tennessee.
- To find access to streams and lakes, the public must get information from six different State and Federal agencies.

#### **Establish Recreational Development Corridors.**

- Regional recreational corridors and National Heritage Areas in many states have been highly successful in bringing economic development to rural areas.
- Large numbers of prime recreational assets lie within four Tennessee corridors: the Appalachian Mountains, the Cumberland Plateau, the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake, and the Mississippi River.
- Each of these four corridors contains rural counties that are excellent candidates for economic development through sustainable nature- and culture-based tourism.



**Local park.**

## ***2. Set aside recreation resources for the future.***

### **Mitigate the impact of growth on natural and cultural heritage.**

- In several areas of Tennessee, land is being converted from rural to urban many times faster than the population is actually growing
- Seven counties in East Tennessee received the nation's eighth worst overall score for sprawl problems in a 2002 survey.
- According to another recent study, parts of Middle Tennessee are now sprawling more than any other big city in the nation.
- Nearly two-thirds of the state's residents now live in urbanized areas, and land conversion threatens their access to recreation experiences involving natural and cultural heritage resources – activities in which most Tennesseans participate.
- Tennessee ranks 13th in the nation in total species biodiversity, but the state has more species listed as endangered than all but four other states, and land conversion is a major cause.
- Many of the counties faced with rapid development and urbanization are ill equipped to manage this growth and need State assistance in protecting recreation resources.



**Roan Mountain State Park.**

### **Acquire recreation lands.**

- The state lost 80,000 acres of potential recreation lands to development in 1997 alone. If current trends continue, by 2025 Tennessee will have about 17% more residents than in 2000 and 1.8 million fewer acres of open space.
- 88 percent of Americans are concerned that many of the country's special places may be lost unless action is taken now to protect them.
- The public supports increased funding for land acquisition. In 2002, three-quarters of all local and state conservation-related ballot measures in other states passed, generating \$10 billion in conservation-related funding, including an estimated \$5.7 billion specifically for land acquisition and restoration.
- Acquisition of recreation lands makes good economic sense. One study showed that the total economic value of visitation to State Parks in Tennessee was \$1.3 billion in 1989.

### **Implement the Scenic Rivers Program and the *Greenways and Trails Plan*.**

- Rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing are activities which engage an estimated 940,000 Tennesseans, or 21% of the state's population.
- Floating down rivers is one of the fastest growing recreation activities among Tennesseans, having increased 77% in participation between 1995 and 2003.
- Greenways provide opportunities for several of the activities with the highest rates of participation among Tennesseans – walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, and viewing wildlife and nature.



### ***3. Ensure consistent quality throughout the Tennessee Recreation System.***

#### **Renovate and maintain State and local recreation facilities.**

- The majority of the State's developed parks were acquired between 1938 and 1970, and their average age is 46 years. 15% of the parks' structures were built more than 60 years ago.
- The State Parks system now contains over 1400 structures comprising approximately 3.7 million square feet and currently valued at approximately \$350 million.
- Between 1990 and 2003, appropriations for major maintenance of these structures declined by an average of \$200,000 per year.
- The maintenance and renovation backlog is estimated at nearly \$100 million for the State Parks

system as a whole, plus an additional \$27 million for upgrading to comply with ADA.

#### **Develop an improved system for the most effective use of TDEC recreation grants.**

- Many local communities in Tennessee have no local parks or recreation facilities.
- Local projects built with funds from TDEC's grants program have not always been maintained as required under the terms of the grants, due to lack of local government funding.
- TDEC has an opportunity to use its grant programs proactively to assist communities with the most severe needs and to address the problem of poor maintenance.



**Paris Landing State Resort Park.**

#### ***4. Generate stronger support for conservation and recreation.***

##### **Establish a statewide environmental education program.**

- The Department of Education's State Environmental Office, established in 1982 to provide curriculum and teacher training to school districts all across the state, was eliminated in 1995, effectively ending the department's support for environmental education in schools.
- The State Parks Program Services section, which supported ranger naturalist programs in the parks, was dismantled under the previous administration
- The environmental education now taking place in schools and parks in Tennessee is fragmented among three different organizations.
- Tennessee has the components of an excellent environmental education infrastructure which needs formal support from the State to become effective.
- Six southeastern states have established statewide councils to support environmental education.

##### **Increase advocacy and funding for parks and conservation in Tennessee.**

- Public workshops, a local agency needs survey, and the TRAC committee all ranked increased funding as a top priority recreation need in Tennessee.
- Between 1990 and 1999, the southeastern states made the deepest cuts of any region in their state park operating budgets.
- The economic benefits of parks and recreation for Tennessee have never been documented, so

government leaders are unaware of the value of recreation for the state and local economies.

##### **Define and maintain continuity of TDEC's Parks and Conservation policies.**

- TDEC, one of the largest departments in Tennessee state government, combines the functions of environmental regulation with those of parks and conservation. These two missions are relatively unrelated, involve very different types of professional expertise, and need to project very different kinds of public images.
- The mission of the State Parks and of TDEC's grants programs has been reinterpreted in different ways under various administrations, causing a lack of continuity and professional perspective in parks and grants policies.

##### **Make greater use of volunteers and Friends groups to support parks.**

- 44 percent of American adults, or 83.9 million people, served as volunteers to some formal organization in 2000. Their donated time represented the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$239 billion.
- The National Park Service has 340 separate volunteer programs which, in Fiscal Year 2002, resulted in 125,000 volunteers donating 4.5 million hours valued at over \$72 million.
- Tennessee now has 20 Friends groups supporting individual State Parks, and the contributions of these groups are significant. Every state and local park could benefit from the support of this kind of organization.



## ***5. Provide recreation programming to address critical needs.***

### **Address the health and fitness needs of target groups.**

- 46% of Tennesseans are overweight, including 23.3% of the state's children. The incidence of obesity in Tennessee has increased by 98% in 11 years.
- 7.7% of the adults in Tennessee have diabetes as compared to 6.1% of the adult population nationally. Diabetes was responsible for over one-third of deaths in Tennessee, in 2001.
- 38% of Tennesseans report no physical activity during their leisure time. This is the fourth highest rate in the nation, and 35% higher than the national rate of inactivity.
- Fewer than 30% of high school students attend a daily physical education class, a decline of nearly 50% in less than a decade.

- 54% of African-Americans and 52% of Hispanics report no free-time physical activity vs. 36% for Whites.
- The CDC found physical inactivity to be more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. This pattern was more pronounced in the southeast than in other parts of the U.S.

### **Help local governments deliver recreation programming.**

- Over 35% of Tennessee residents have no local parks department to provide recreation programming.
- Recreation programming has proven very effective in helping to decrease drug use, school drop-out, and other self-destructive behaviors among teens.



**Local athletic center.**



**Cherokee National Forest.**

# ACTION PROGRAM

The following section presents the 18 proposals that comprise this State Recreation Plan's 2003-2008 Action Program. Each proposal includes a discussion that defines the related critical issues, explains how these issues derive from the plan's public input findings and/or the current situation in Tennessee, identifies challenges and opportunities facing the State in addressing these issues, and describes successful models that may serve as guides.

## *Make The Most of What We Have*

### **PROPOSAL 1: Organize existing Federal, State and local resources into a seamless "Tennessee Recreation System."**

Tennessee's supply of public recreation assets, analyzed elsewhere in this Plan (*see Recreation Supply*), has been created over many decades through the efforts of a wide range of government agencies, each acting, for the most part, independently. Currently there are five Federal agencies, six State agencies, and hundreds of local governments involved in some aspect of managing and developing recreation resources in Tennessee (*see Public Recreation Infrastructure*.) Coordination among these diverse agencies has not been a major priority. As a result, the recreation infrastructure suffers from inconsistency of goals and standards, duplication of services, and fragmented planning efforts.

Certain kinds of agreements across agency lines have taken place in recent years. For example, TDEC and TWRA have entered into an informal partnership in which TDEC has gathered geographic information about local and State park properties and TWRA has included the data in its Geographic Information System database. However, there has not been a concerted effort to consolidate management of all the State's diverse recreation assets under a unified system.

Now the National Park Service is urging states to network their many recreation assets through interagency partnerships. Park Service Director Fran Mainella has said, "One of the objectives of the National Park Service is to achieve an outdoor recreation network, a seamless park system accessible to all, through our partnerships with states and local communities." She points out that the visiting public often does not know or care who administers a particular park area.

Her statement echoes a recommendation by the NPS advisory board, the National Leadership Council, for the Park Service to "...serve as a catalyst to encourage collaboration among public and private park and recreation systems at all levels – to build a national network of parks and open space across America." At its March 2002 meeting the National Leadership Council of the NPS adopted as a vision: "By 2005, the National Park Service, working with its partners, will be one of the leaders in connecting Americans with a seamless national network of parks, places, and open spaces that enhances the protection and understanding of America's heritage and resources and provides recreational opportunities for all." ("Case Statement - A Seamless National Network of Parks, Historic Places, and Open Spaces", NPS National Leadership Council, 9/16/02)

This NPS initiative proposes three forms of

networking to achieve the goal of a seamless recreation system:

#### Organizational Networking

- Public-private and inter-jurisdictional coordination and partnerships,
- Shared planning, management, scientific and GIS data, and marketing, and
- Sharing of staff and resources.

#### Information/Programmatic Networking

- Websites and “distance learning” opportunities,
- Coordinated education and interpretive themes, and
- “One-stop” recreation information, fees, and permitting.

#### Physical Networking:

- Greenways and trails for health, recreation, and connecting people to the land,
- Parks, cultural sites, and refuges as hubs in the network, and
- Wildlife corridors.

Responding to this new initiative by the National Park Service, the TRAC committee has proposed that Tennessee should invest in long-term partnerships that reach across jurisdictional and cultural boundaries to create a unified, seamless Tennessee Recreation System.

### Successful Models

The 2155-mile **Appalachian Trail** passes through 14 states, eight National Forests, six units of the National Park System, and over 80 units of state, local, and private parkland and open space. Its corridor now includes over 100,000-acres. The trail provides recreation for over four million users a year in a continuous greenway corridor near the crest of the Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to Maine. The trail is managed under a Cooperative Manage-

ment System, which pulls together the 32 local trail maintaining clubs with local governments, the 14 State governments, and four Federal agencies, as well as land trusts and conservancies.

**Florida’s system of greenways** is planned and managed to conserve native landscapes, ecosystems, and species and to connect people to the land and to archaeological, historic and cultural resources. This network involves a partnership of State, Federal, and private entities coordinated by the Florida Greenways Commission. The network is also linked through an information sharing network run by the University of Florida, which contains a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database. All data on the greenways are posted on the web, and maps can be downloaded from the web site. This greenways system contains over 8 million acres of parks and open spaces in public ownership, with an additional 2.5 million acres in private ownership, all linked by corridors that include over 2,500 miles of paddling trails and 7,200 miles of walking trails.

**The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network** is a system of over 100 sites – including parks, refuges, museums, historic communities, and water trails – dispersed over the 64,000 square-mile, three-state, Chesapeake Bay watershed. These sites are managed by over 50 different partners that are linked into a Network – through maps, guides, a web site, collaborative projects and integrated interpretation.

Tennessee has long been the leader nationally and regionally in recreation policy innovation:

- The first National Park outside the West,
- The first State Scenic Rivers program in the nation,
- The first Natural Heritage program in the nation.

This Action Program proposes another addition to that list: the first seamless statewide recreation system.



**Gatlinburg Highland Games.****Implementation Strategies**

**1.1:** The Governor should direct the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) to serve as the formal interagency mechanism to formulate and implement strategic policies to establish a seamless Tennessee Recreation System. Goals set forth for the Tennessee Recreation System should include:

- To provide for efficient coordination of planning efforts among all State, Federal, and local recreation-related agencies, including the sharing of information, plans, and professional expertise. Areas to coordinate may include acquisitions, conservation policies, park planning, resource management, trails and blueways, programming, funding requests and geographic information. Implementation may include a web-based searchable library of downloadable plans and information that can be shared by all recreation-related agencies.
- To coordinate geographic information about all recreation properties and opportunities in the state through a centralized database of public lands data at TWRA and a database of private recreation providers at TDTD.
- To minimize wasteful duplication of programs and facilities, allowing State, Federal, and local agencies to accomplish more with the funding and manpower assets they have currently.
- To establish consistent standards, policies and management procedures for all recreation sites at all

levels, so that the public can depend on a reliable standard of quality at any site they visit (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*) This should include technical assistance from State and Federal agencies to local governments to improve resource management at the local level.

- To continue to promote the creation of a statewide network of greenways and trails, as proposed by the Governor's Council on Greenways and Trails in the *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* (*see Proposal 9: Greenways and Trails.*)
- To consolidate public information about the full range of recreation opportunities the state has to offer, making such information more readily accessible for Tennesseans and out-of-state visitors through distribution of printed literature and a one-stop Tennessee Recreation System website (*see Proposal 3: One-Stop Website, and Proposal 4: Printed Information.*)
- To support TDEC-RES and PARTAS in providing recreation opportunities to Tennessee residents who are currently underserved (such as inner city youth, rural residents, disabled residents, low income residents, and non-English speaking residents) by encouraging the sharing of facilities and programming across jurisdictional lines (*see Proposal 2: Multi-use Agreements, Proposal 18: Health and Fitness, and Proposal 19: Local Programming Ability of Local Governments.*)
- To support ECD in promoting regional recreational development enterprises, in which assets are networked to form recreational destinations that can be branded and marketed cooperatively for sustainable tourism and economic development (*see Proposal 5: Recreational Development Corridors.*)
- To ensure that the Tennessee Recreation System includes ongoing partnerships with **development districts, local governing bodies, private providers, and related non-profit groups.** The TRAC committee should serve as a conduit for participation by these stakeholders (*see Proposal 17: Recreation Plan Follow-up.*)

## **PROPOSAL 2:** **Facilitate formal multi-use agree-** **ments among all levels of govern-** **ment.**

One of the goals of the proposed Tennessee Recreation System is “to deliver recreation opportunities to Tennessee residents who are currently underserved by encouraging the sharing of facilities and programming across jurisdictional lines” (*see Proposal 1: Tennessee Recreation System.*)

In many rural areas there are few or no recreational facilities or programs provided by the local government. Twenty-four Tennessee counties currently have no organized recreation delivery system (*see Recreation Supply.*) Yet every community has recreation resources: local schools have facilities that are idle much of the time and could be used to serve the larger community. Many rural communities are located near a State Park or other State or Federal recreation resource, where a local Friends group could structure recreation programs (*see Proposal 16: Volunteers and Friends Groups.*) The most cost-effective way to meet a community’s recreational needs is to make greater use of existing resources through interagency sharing.

Sharing of facilities across jurisdictional lines typically requires that the partners negotiate a “multi-use agreement,” which formally defines responsibilities for such issues as liability, supervision of participants, and increased maintenance costs. Multi-use agreements are currently underutilized in Tennessee: only about 40 local governments in Tennessee currently have formal multi-use agreements with school districts. The State can make more efficient use of Tennessee’s recreation resources and better meet the needs of underserved rural residents by facilitating and encouraging greater use of intergovernmental multi-use agreements between partnering agencies.

## **Implementation Strategies**

**2.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS and State Parks should encourage various forms of multi-use agreements between all levels of government.

**2.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should provide publications and training for local governments on how to negotiate such intergovernmental agreements. PARTAS should also update the *School-Park Agreement Information* booklet.

**2.3:** TDEC-RES should urge the Tennessee Municipal League and other related agencies, such as Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association, Tennessee School Boards Association, the County Services Association, and local planning commissions, to pass resolutions to support multi-use agreements, to inform local governments about this resolution, and to encourage local governments to enter into such agreements.



**Holston River, Kingsport.**

### ***PROPOSAL 3:*** **Develop a comprehensive one-stop website for recreation information.**

One important function of this state recreation planning process is to respond to changes in the recreation field. The most dramatic change in recreation since publication of the last State Recreation Plan in 1995 has been the rapid rise in the installed base of broadband Internet access and the parallel growth in the use of the web as a source of information. One of the recreation-related impacts of this new development is reflected in two studies by the Travel Industry Association of America:

“When travelers were asked what media they used in the past year to plan their vacations, 40 percent said they used an Internet website for travel planning, making the Internet the most used source for travel news and information. The survey found that, of all the types of travel media available, Internet websites were considered the most useful,” (Travel Industry Association of America Press Release, September 6, 2001.)

“The number of Americans using the Internet for actual travel planning has increased dramatically since 1997, when only about 12 million Americans were planning and researching travel options online. This has risen to about 64 million online travel planners in 2002. Forty-two percent say that they now do all or most of their trip planning online, up from 29 percent who did so last year,” (Travel Industry Association of America Press Release, December 9, 2002.)

While these studies refer to travel planning, which includes booking airline flights and hotel reservations, the findings also suggest that people may now be using the Internet as a primary source of information about recreation resources such as parks, trails, rivers and lakes, historic and cultural sites, hunting and fishing areas, etc.

Recognizing this major trend, State and Federal government agencies have begun to capitalize on the web as a highly effective medium for disseminating public information about recreation opportunities.

The U.S. Department of the Interior launched a major initiative in 2002 called the “Recreation One-Stop,” with the goal of developing a single Internet source of information about all Federal, State, and local recreation sites in the country. This major undertaking has resulted in the Recreation.gov website, which is under ongoing development. Currently that site has links to 59 recreation resources in Tennessee, all Federally managed. So far three states have added their states’ parks and recreation information to this site.

The TRAC committee has proposed a similar approach for the State of Tennessee. One of the goals of the proposed Tennessee Recreation System is “to consolidate public information about the full range of recreation opportunities the state has to offer, making such information more readily accessible for Tennesseans and out-of-state visitors through...a one-stop Tennessee Recreation System website.”

Currently the State provides the public with recreation information through several websites:

**TDEC** has a highly informative and user-friendly website for the State Parks system (<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks>). This site currently includes the following features:

- An interactive map of the state with all parks indicated and links that take the user to individual park pages with extensive information about driving directions, available park features and recreation opportunities,
- A searchable list of activities to help users who are looking for opportunities for a specific activity,
- An online reservation service for inns, cabins, and campgrounds, and
- Downloadable park brochures.

**Cumberland Trail at Laurel-Snow Pocket Wilderness State Natural Area.**

TDEC also has an informative website for their Recreation Services Division ([www.state.tn.us/environment/recreation](http://www.state.tn.us/environment/recreation)). This site needs updating, but currently includes the following features:

- An overview of the division's grants, planning and technical assistance services,
- Information on the State Recreation Plan, and
- Downloadable publications and directories.

TWRA's website (<http://www.state.tn.us/twra>) is an encyclopedic source of information about hunting and fishing and non-game wildlife in the state. The site does not contain an interactive map or give information about individual sites, such as the kinds of recreational opportunities available there or directions to reach the site. In addition, there are no links to the sites of other agencies that share management of many of the Wildlife Management Areas.

The **Department of Agriculture's** State Forest

website (<http://www.state.tn.us/agriculture/forestry>) includes an interactive map of Tennessee showing all forests with links to a brief description of each. This site does not give information about recreational opportunities available on the forests, and does not contain links to other agencies, such as TWRA and TDEC, that share management of some sites.

The **Department of Transportation's** website (<http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/>) includes maps of bicycle routes in the state, but these are not currently downloadable. The site does not appear to contain information about scenic parkways or byways. (It should be noted that Driving for Pleasure is the number three recreation activity in terms of total participants, engaging an estimated 64% of Tennesseans annually, according to data provided for this plan from the NSRE.)

The **Department of Tourism's** website (<http://www.tnvacation.com/>) is the most comprehensive of the state's recreation-related sites. It contains an



advanced search engine that allows the user to search by region and to select from lists of types of attractions, heritage trails, outdoor recreation activities, camping facilities, and accommodation. The site contains information about most Federal recreation resources, such as National Parks, and provides links to the web pages of individual Federal sites. However, the site does not currently contain complete information about recreation sites managed by other State agencies. For example, a search for State Parks in Middle Tennessee returned only two sites in the State Parks system: the Cumberland Trail and the Carter House. A key word search on “Wildlife Management Area” returned only one of TWRA’s sites. In addition, the site does not currently provide links to the web pages of individual sites managed by other state agencies.

These websites are useful sources of public information and represent a good beginning in what will be an ongoing process of refining the Internet services provided by the State. The TRAC committee has proposed that Tennessee begin to move toward a more comprehensive approach, recognizing that a seamless recreation system should include a one-stop source of recreation information for residents and tourists.

### Implementation Strategies

**3.1:** TDEC and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) should work cooperatively to develop a recreation one-stop website for the Tennessee Recreation System. The first phase of this process should be to include all recreation sites managed by State and Federal agencies on the existing Tennessee Vacation website and to provide links to the web pages of each of these sites. TWRA, TDOT, TDA, COE, TVA, NPS, USFS, and USFWS should cooperate by providing the necessary information to TDEC. TDEC and TDTD should establish a strong, cooperative relationship to implement this proposal.

**3.2:** The ultimate goal of this initiative should be to create a comprehensive Tennessee Recreation System site with the following features:

- Interactive maps of the state showing the major State and Federal sites and major attractions in each region.
- A searchable database of all recreation-related sites managed by government agencies (Federal, State, and local) as well as privately managed sites.
- A direct link to the external web page of each site in the database, if such a page exists.
- Search options for the full range of recreation activities and information for a wide range of users.
- Options for searching for all resources, events, and attractions in any one of the state’s Recreational Development Corridors (*see Proposal 5: Recreational Development Corridors.*)
- Information on how the public can get involved in supporting public recreation resources, through Friends groups or by volunteering (Federal, State, and local.)
- Information about cultural and recreational events of all types.
- Information and downloadable maps specific to particular nature-based and culture-based activities, such as birding and other wildlife observation, driving scenic or historic byways, fishing, etc.

**3.3:** TDEC should ensure that all recreation resource information collected for this website is organized to meet U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) protocols for the Recreation.gov website and should have the data exported to DOI for inclusion in that site.

**PROPOSAL 4:**  
**Provide more printed information about State and Federal recreation resources.**

To disseminate information to the public, TDEC has developed brochures for most State Parks and a booklet on the whole State Parks system. These materials are helpful in getting park and recreation information to the public. However, they are not currently available at Interstate Welcome Centers and other information outlets, because the department has not received funding to reprint them. In addition, the Division of State Parks determined that the current State Parks booklet, developed in 2002, is ineffective in serving the information needs of the public and the department.

In addition, TDEC's Recreation Educational Services Division periodically develops informative maps about the state's recreation resources. The division published a very popular wall map showing all State and Federal and major local recreation resources in 1984, but that map has been long out of print. Plans are underway to publish a newly updated version in 2004. Such a map will be an important tool for promoting awareness of the interconnected components of the Tennessee Recreation System (*see Proposal 1: Seamless Recreation System.*)

The division also began developing a map of the state's greenways and trails system in the fall of 2002. A preliminary map was completed in October, 2002, and the division has continued to update the information as new greenways have been established. TDEC hopes to publish a State Greenways and Trails Map in 2004. Such a map will enhance opportunities for participants in three activities ranked by this plan's analysis as high participation activities: walking for pleasure, day hiking, and bicycling (*see Demand.*)

A second set of information needs involves two

specific kinds of activities - observing wildlife and nature and visiting historic sites - which were identified as high participation activities in this plan's analysis of the demand for individual recreation activities (*see Demand.*) Large numbers of Tennesseans could benefit from greater information about the availability of these types of resources in the state.

A third information need relates to water-based recreation activities. Public input from this plan's public workshops placed a high priority on blueways/ water trails and on public lake access for fishing, boating and lakeside recreation. Likewise, analysis of participation levels in specific activities (*see Demand*) has revealed that swimming in a lake or stream is a high participation activity and that rafting/canoeing/ kayaking/tubing is a rapidly growing activity group. Agency representatives have reported that the state appears to have an adequate supply of lake and river access sites, and have suggested that the public perception of need may stem from a lack of readily available information.

## Implementation Strategies

**4.1:** TDEC should make printed literature about recreation sites more readily available to the public by the following means:

- In FY 2004, seek budget funding to reprint existing literature about State Parks and distribute this information through TDOT's Interstate Welcome Centers and other visitor information outlets, especially at the individual park sites.
- Seek funding to develop and print a new, comprehensive brochure about State Parks that will better suit the needs of the department and the recreation public.
- Plan to develop a permanent or interactive information kiosk/computer system at each TDOT Welcome Center.

- Publish and distribute a Tennessee State Recreation System Map showing all the major public recreation sites in the state, including Federal and State Parks, Scenic Rivers, long-distance hiking trails, Wildlife Management Areas, reservoir recreation areas, and major local parks. **TDEC-RES** should undertake this project in partnership with **TWRA**.
- Develop and distribute small publications on specialized themes targeted specifically to those engaged in high-participation nature-based and culture-based activities (*for a list of high participation activities, see Demand.*) A few representative examples of such publications would be:
  - A Guide to Champion Trees on Public Lands, presenting information already compiled by the Division of Forestry, for those interested in nature-based recreation.
  - Heritage Trails, a compilation of information from **TDOT**, **TDEC - Historical Commission**, **TDEC - Division of Archaeology**, **NPS**, local governments, and Tennessee historians on historic trails and roads important to Tennessee history, and the historic sites along them.

**4.2:** All agencies that provide boating, fishing, and swimming access to lakes and rivers in Tennessee (**TVA**, **COE**, **USFS**, **TWRA**, **TDEC**, and **TDOT**) should work cooperatively to publish and distribute a guide to water access sites in Tennessee. This information should include guides to access sites for motor boat launching; put-in and take-out sites for rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing; and sites for swimming in a lake or stream.



**Shiloh National Military Park.**

**Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.****Pickett State Park.**

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**PROPOSAL 5:  
Organize, brand and market Recreation  
Development Corridors.**

A 2002 tourism industry survey described the link between tourism and outdoor recreation as follows:

“American travelers love the great outdoors, as evidenced by the nearly 65 million Americans who say they have taken at least one trip of 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home to visit a national or state park and/or forest in the past year. This equates to 31percent of all U.S. adults, according to a recent Travel Poll by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA). In fact, participating in outdoor activities, including visits to national or state parks, is the second most popular trip activity overall by American travelers,” (Travel Industry Association of America Press Release, 10/10/02.)

One indicator of this growth in outdoor recreation-related tourism can be found in Sevier County, which has become the number two county in the state in terms of total economic impact from tourism, thanks in large part to the over nine million annual visitors that are attracted to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A similar growth trend has been found in visitor interest in cultural and historic assets.

“A new study from the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and Smithsonian Magazine shows continued and growing traveler interest in experiencing cultural, arts, historic and heritage activities. Study results, as reported in *The Historic/Cultural Traveler*, 2003 Edition, show that a remarkable 81 percent of U.S. adults who traveled in the past year, or 118 million, are considered historic/cultural travelers. These travelers included historical or cultural activities on almost 217 million person-trips last year, up 13 percent from 192 million in



1996,” (Travel Industry Association of America Press Release, 6/30/03.)

Much of this growth in visitation is occurring in rural areas:

“Nearly two-thirds of all adults in the Nation, or 87 million individuals, have taken a trip to a rural destination within the past three years (Travel Industry Association of America, 2001.) Almost nine out of ten of these trips were for leisure purposes,” (cited in: “Rural Tourism: An Annotated Bibliography,” Dennis M. Brown, Regional Economist, Economic Research Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.)

These trends in the visitor market are mirrored in this plan’s analysis of the demand for recreational activities (*see Demand*), which has found that driving for pleasure, viewing and photographing nature and wildlife, and visiting historic sites are among the activities with the highest participation rates among residents of Tennessee and the surrounding states. This data also suggests that wildlife viewing, outdoor adventure activities, and day hiking are among the most rapidly growing activities among Tennessee residents. These data suggest opportunities for the state to harness its natural, cultural, historic, and agricultural assets as engines of economic development.

## Successful Models

The State of Texas has established the **Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail**. This is a regional initiative which involves 43 Texas counties and the entire Texas coastal region. The Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife characterizes the trail as “hugely successful.” Its success derives from the rapid growth of wildlife watching as a recreational activity. According to a recent *Baltimore Sun* article,

“...bird-watching is the fastest growing segment of outdoor recreation in the country. A U.S. Forest Service survey in 2000 put the number of casual birders at 71 million, up from 21 million in 1982. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates 46

million people are serious birders, who spend serious money - as much as \$34 billion annually - on travel, guides and gear,” (“Vacationing with an eye to the sky”, *The Baltimore Sun*, Sunday, May 4, 2003.)

The **Tennessee Department of Tourist Development** has successfully packaged and marketed four Heritage Trails: Tennessee’s Backroads (south central); Overhill (southeast); Natchez Trace (west and middle); and First Frontier (northeast). Each of these corridors links numerous historic and cultural assets within the region to create a viable tourism destination. This strategy is designed to take advantage of the fact that 25 percent of Tennessee tourists now visit heritage sites, (Tennessee’s Business, “Economic revitalization through Tourism,” Business and Economic Research Center, MTSU College of Business, vol. 7, no. 4, 1997.)

The Federally designated **Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area**, administered by the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation in cooperation with NPS, has brought national recognition as well as Federal funding and assistance to the historic Civil War sites in the state. Many other National Heritage Areas are being created nationwide as states and regional organizations are discovering the many benefits of this program.

Likewise, the **Tennessee Department of Agriculture** has launched “Agri-Tourism” initiatives in cooperation with the Department of Tourism Development. The program is designed to encourage farm-related activities and value-added production that can attract visitors and lead to rural economic development. Tennessee has several successful agri-tourism businesses across the state such as pick-your-own farms, corn mazes, farm tours, gift shops and wineries that use Tennessee-grown products.

## Opportunities for Tennessee

Clearly there is growing interest now in developing recreational opportunities to generate economic growth, and Tennessee has begun to find ways to capitalize on its excellent supply of recreation assets in this way. Thus far, these efforts have generally targeted discrete segments of the recreation-related tourism market. TDEC has directed its attention to marketing State Parks and Natural Areas. The Department of Tourism Development has focused on heritage and culture-based visitation, and the Department of Agriculture has worked to develop agri-tourism. The TRAC committee has proposed that the State link these separate efforts to promote regional economic growth and sustainable tourism in a more concerted fashion.

This plan's analysis of recreation supply in Tennessee (*see Recreation Supply*) indicates that large numbers of recreational assets are grouped within four corridors running in north-south bands across the state: the Appalachian Mountains, the Cumberland Plateau, the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake, and the Mississippi River. Each of these corridors contains economically depressed rural counties that have lost their traditional resource-based industries. Each is within easy driving access of Tennessee's cities as well the urban areas of surrounding states. If all the high-quality recreation assets in each corridor are organized, branded, and marketed cooperatively, these regions will have far greater potential to gain awareness in the in-state and non-resident visitor markets and to become recognized as attractive trip destinations.

Much of the infrastructure for this kind of regional cooperation already exists. ECD, TDTD, and the nine development districts are providing technical assistance to numerous local tourism alliances in these corridors. In addition, each of the corridors is already taking steps toward regional organization:

- The Mississippi River Natural and Recreational Corridor initiative is a regional development

project organized by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation in partnership with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Memphis Regional Chamber, and the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis.

- In the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake Corridor, a nine-county partnership is working cooperatively to organize and develop the region's recreational assets.
- In the Cumberland Plateau Corridor, the Tennessee Nature Conservancy, the Alliance for the Cumberlands, and the Friends of South Cumberland State Recreation Area are working on various regional recreation-related projects.
- The Appalachian Mountain Corridor has already seen major recreation-related economic development in some counties, most notably Sevier. The corridor's Overhill Heritage Trail involves cooperative regional marketing in partnership with TDTD, and the Vision 2025 process in upper east Tennessee involves a multi-county planning effort.

While these kinds of local initiatives within the corridors are essential, their resources are limited. To pursue a Recreational Development Corridor initiative successfully, each of these regions will also need leadership from the State in providing technical assistance; developing a formal mechanism for coordinating the many agencies and entities that relate to recreation, tourism; and economic development in their area, and possibly initial project development funding.

## Risks and Benefits

A new perspective that links recreation, tourism, and economic development on a regional scale can provide many benefits, both for the regions and for the state as a whole:

- It can bring new tourism revenues and business activity to the local economies.

- It can bring new revenues into the state by increasing out-of-state visitation.
- It can provide jobs that do not require intense capitalization or recruiting. Though many tourism-related jobs are seasonal and low-paying, these jobs can benefit many residents of these rural areas.
- By enhancing quality of life through increased recreational opportunities, it can improve the business climate in these regions and assist corporate recruitment efforts.
- It can counter the increasing development pressures on the recreation assets of these regions by providing strong economic incentives to protect the resources on which economic growth depends.
- It can provide a mechanism for helping local residents to add definition, value and pride to their cultures and folkways, giving them added protection from the pressures of a changing society.
- It can improve recreation opportunities for all Tennessee residents by increasing access to information about existing resources and by helping to protect those resources for future generations.

The inherent risk of any successful tourism-related economic development initiative is that local communities will be affected by negative impacts from increased visitation. Such pressures are readily apparent in Sevier County, where an economic miracle has not come without significant growing pains. Potential negative impacts must be addressed in any Recreational Development Corridor initiative if it is to be a sustainable development process.

## Implementation Strategies

**5.1:** ECD should lead an initiative to develop Recreational Development Corridor plans for each of four regions: the Appalachian Mountains, the Cumberland Plateau, the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake, and the Mississippi River. These plans should be developed in cooperation with TDEC, TWRA, TDTD, TDA, the Development Districts, and the Resource Conservation and Development Councils. Active participation and input should be sought from all State, Federal and local agencies with recreation-related missions and from local business groups, non-profit organizations, and residents. The goal of these plans should be to organize, brand, and market sustainable nature-based, heritage-based, and agriculture-based recreation opportunities while protecting and preserving the recreation resources of the region. Federal designation as a National Heritage Area should be sought for one or more of these corridors.

**5.2:** The Governor should direct the TRAC committee to encourage and facilitate interagency partnerships to support each of these corridor plans, and to seek ways to provide initial project funding from the State.

**5.3:** ECD should also consider the feasibility of developing two additional corridors along major interstate highways, I-81 and I-40 from Bristol to Memphis, and I-65 through Middle Tennessee, as appropriate projects for the Recreational Development Corridor concept.



Tennessee River at Kentucky Lake, TVA reservoir.



**Center Hill Lake, Corps of Engineers reservoir.**



## *Set Aside Recreation Resources for the Future*

### **PROPOSAL 6:** **Mitigate the impact of growth on Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage.**

#### **Population growth and sprawl in Tennessee**

Tennessee's population has risen steadily during the past 50 years. And, as the chart below shows, the state's population has increasingly settled in areas classified as urban, so that today nearly two-thirds of Tennesseans live in urban areas.

These changes in themselves would not constitute an extraordinary challenge for recreation planning. The problem lies in the fact that Tennesseans are not moving in high numbers into existing urban neighborhoods. Instead, as Tennessee's metropolitan areas have gained in population, they have spread outward, urbanizing the surrounding rural landscape. The impacts of this growth on the surrounding counties have been multiplied by prevailing low-density suburban development patterns, which have caused land to be converted

many times faster than the population has actually grown. In the most extreme case, the Johnson City-Kingsport-Bristol area has been converting land from rural to urban at a rate that is 9.2 times the area's rate of population growth (*see Table 1.*)

Due to this low-density development pattern and the resulting high rates of land conversion, parts of Tennessee now rank among the worst in the nation in terms of the impacts of sprawl:

- The seven counties in the Knoxville region received the nation's eighth worst overall score for sprawl problems in a 2002 survey by Smart Growth America, ("Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact," Rolf Pendall, Cornell University, and Don Chen, Smart Growth America, 2002.)
- According to a recent *USA TODAY* study of population density and its changes in the 1990s, Nashville is now sprawling more than any other big city in the nation, ("Counties try to preserve quiet life ; Developing rural areas are 'test cases for smart growth'," Haya El Nasser. *USA TODAY*. April 22, 2003.)

**Table 1. Rates of population change and land conversion in Tennessee**

Metropolitan Statistical Area	Change in Population, 1982-1997	Change in Urbanized Land, 1982-1997	Rate of land change vs. rate of population change
Johnson City-Kingsport-Bristol	6.4%	58.8%	9.2
Chattanooga	8.5%	52.7%	6.2
Knoxville	17.1%	70.9%	4.1
Memphis	17.1%	67.3%	3.9
Nashville	33.4%	103.0%	3.1
Jackson	15.3%	44.9%	2.9
Clarksville	25.0%	71.6%	2.9

- According to a Brookings Institution study, Nashville is now the 11<sup>th</sup> fastest growing metropolitan area in terms of its rate of land conversion. Nashville urbanized an average of almost one acre of land to accommodate each additional resident of the metropolitan region, (Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy, "Who Sprawls Most? How Growth Patterns Differ Across the U.S.," William Fulton, Rolf Pendall, Mai Nguyen, and Alicia Harrison, the Brookings Institution, 2001.)
- The Nashville Basin now has the highest average number of vehicle miles traveled per person per day in the country, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

These rapidly growing urban areas are projected to continue adding population in the coming decades. The populations of those counties that added population at the highest rate between 1990 and 2000 are projected to continue leading the list of fast growing counties in the next decades (*see Table 2.*)

If the dominant pattern of suburban development continues in these counties, the extent of land conversion there will be extreme. If Cheatham County, for example, continues to sprawl at the current average rate of the Nashville area, it will nearly quadruple its urbanized land by the year 2020. State, Federal and local agencies currently manage a total of 23,200 acres of recreation land in Cheatham County, which represents 12% of the county's total acreage (*see Table 3.*) In addition, the county

**Table 2. Counties with the greatest projected population change**

County	% change 1990-2000	% change 2000-2010	% change 2000-2020
Cheatham	39.4%	30.6%	63.9%
Williamson	47.5%	27.3%	57.8%
Rutherford	43.5%	25.4%	53.5%
Montgomery	30.4%	23.7%	52.9%
Sevier	29.9%	22.9%	48.9%
Dickson	24.5%	22.1%	46.9%
Wilson	29.8%	22.2%	45.2%
Sumner	25.7%	21.3%	43.6%
Lewis	23.7%	22.7%	41.9%
Stewart	27.2%	20.9%	40.5%
Union	23.1%	19.5%	39.4%
Marshall	25.7%	19.9%	39.4%
Hickman	25.0%	18.1%	35.7%
Robertson	29.8%	16.7%	34.2%
Tipton	27.1%	15.4%	31.9%
Jefferson	32.6%	14.2%	28.5%
Meigs	25.4%	13.8%	27.0%
Loudon	26.6%	13.0%	26.3%
Bedford	17.1%	13.3%	26.1%

(UT Center for Business and Economic Research, March 1999.)

contains some of the most scenic stretches of the Harpeth River, designated as a State Scenic River upstream of Cheatham County, which is a resource of statewide significance which attracts many recreational paddlers.

All of these recreation properties are outstanding examples of Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage. In the context of this *2003-2008 Tennessee State Recreation Plan*, the question that must be addressed is: What would be the probable impacts of a fourfold increase in urbanized area on the prime recreation resources in this county and others like it?

### The impact of sprawl on recreation

In terms of recreation planning, rapid conversion of the landscape represents the single most urgent crisis in Tennessee. Land conversion affects recreation opportunities in many ways:

- It eliminates many farms and forests on which wildlife depends, and fragments the reserve of natural habitat which remains.
- It causes many streams and reservoirs to be

burdened with silt, pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants, lowering water quality and endangering aquatic life.

- It disfigures the scenic beauty of rural landscapes.
- It causes the loss of many historic sites and threatens the traditional cultures of small rural communities.
- It removes large amounts of land from the state's reserves of open space, which will be needed for future parks and wildlife areas to serve a growing population.

All of these effects of rapid urban growth are threatening Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage, directly affecting the public's access to quality recreational experiences both now and even more in the years ahead. High participation recreation activities which are adversely affected by these impacts of sprawl include: viewing or photographing animals and birds, driving for pleasure, viewing/photographing natural scenery, swimming in a lake or stream, fishing in freshwater, and visiting historic sites (*see Demand.*)

**Table 3. Federal, State, and Local recreation assets in Cheatham County**

Recreation Site	Management	Acres
Bluff Creek Area	COE	2
Brush Creek Area	COE	6
Cheatham Dam Right Bank Area	COE	24
Harpeth Recreation Area	COE	23
Lock A Campground	COE	69
Sycamore Creek Area	COE	11
Mound Bottom State Archaeological Area	TDEC	107
Narrows of the Harpeth State Historic Area	TDEC	111
Cheatham Reservoir WMA	TWRA	1,988
Cheatham WMA	TWRA	19,873
Dyson Ditch Refuge	TWRA	304
	Local	<u>682</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23,200</b>

One important way to preserve outstanding remnants of this heritage is for the State to acquire them before they are lost to development (*see Proposal 7: Land Acquisition*.) However, public lands represent only 3.7% of the total land in the state. Most of the state's natural and cultural heritage exists in the 96.3% which is privately owned. As urban populations continue to rise, bringing rapid economic growth to suburban counties, an increasing amount of this private land will inevitably be converted to developed uses.

### Forests and Farmland

Tennessee is on the edge of a band where forest land is being converted much more rapidly than elsewhere in the nation. A recent report by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) found that Tennessee had the nation's 8th highest rate of conversion of farm and forestland. The AFT list of the most threatened "major land resource areas" in the nation indicates the Nashville Basin is the 12<sup>th</sup> most at-risk area, and the only area among the southeast states in this threat category.

It must be noted that rapid conversion of farm and forest acreage is not the rule in most parts of the state. Urban sprawl is still a relatively localized phenomenon in Tennessee, with large amounts of forest and farmland still remaining outside the affected areas. In fact, the *Southern Forest Resources Assessment* projects that total forested acreage in Tennessee will actually increase in coming years, as timber prices rise, causing farmland to be converted to forest, (*The Southern Forest Resource Assessment*, David N. Wear and John G. Greis, Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, and Southern Region, USDA Forest Service, 2002.)

Likewise, the total acreage of farmland in Tennessee has remained fairly stable since 1990, despite the amount of land conversion in urban areas.

If conversion of farm and forest land is not a significant problem in many areas of Tennessee, why is it a critical issue in terms of recreation planning? The reason is twofold:

- Nearly two-thirds of the state's residents now live in urbanized areas, and land conversion threatens their access to recreation experiences involving natural and cultural heritage resources – activities in which most Tennesseans participate (*see Demand*.)
- If the rates of population growth and land conversion continue as projected for the next 20 years in Tennessee's urban counties, existing recreational resources may become overcrowded. Options for state and local governments to provide additional parks close to home for a growing population will become severely limited.

### Biodiversity and Water Quality

A major component of the state's natural heritage is its excellent diversity of plants, animals and fish. Tennessee ranks 13th in the nation in total species biodiversity, according to an April 2002 report by NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy. This richness of biodiversity occurs primarily because Tennessee sits astride the confluence of northern and southern ecoregions and spans highly diverse habitat types, from the Appalachian Mountains to the plain of the Upper Mississippi River Delta. Clearly this extraordinarily high level of wildlife diversity is a major recreation asset for the state.

But Tennessee is losing its biodiversity at an alarming rate. The state ranks 7th highest in the nation in terms of total species extinctions. According to the USFWS, Tennessee now has more Federally listed species of plants and animals than all but four other states, and is the only one of the highest risk states that does not have a marine coastline.

**Cane Creek Falls, Fall Creek Falls State Resort Park.**



As farm and forest lands are converted, wildlife diversity is affected in several ways:

- The converted acreage no longer provides viable habitat, crowding wildlife into ever smaller ranges.
- Areas that were once large areas of open space become fragmented into disconnected parcels, limiting the effective ranges of wildlife.
- Plant communities, which cannot move to an adjoining range, are plowed under.
- Disturbance of the ground during construction and subsequent suburban activities on the land produce nonpoint-source pollution, which diminishes the water quality of affected streams.

This last impact is having a major impact on Tennessee's aquatic species. The state ranks 4th in the nation in amphibian diversity, and 2nd highest in

freshwater fish diversity, but also ranks 8th highest in risk to amphibian diversity, and 9th highest in risk to fish diversity. Nonpoint-source pollution, which the EPA has called "the last major impediment to clean water," is a major reason for these threats to aquatic species in Tennessee.

"Nonpoint sources contribute the largest amount of pollutants to Tennessee's rivers, streams, and lakes," according to a study by Vanderbilt University. The same study identifies silt as the primary cause of stream impairment, and eroded sediment from land development as a major source of this silt. ("The Clean Water Challenge: Improving Tennessee's Water Quality By Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution in its Rivers, Lakes and Streams," Vanderbilt Center for Environmental Management Studies (VCEMS), July 2002.)

Highway, road, and bridge construction alone impaired over 800 miles of rivers in Tennessee



between 1998 and 2000, according to TDEC. And once land is developed, additional pollutants begin to burden the adjacent waterways. These pollutants include chemicals and fertilizers from lawns and gardens, oil, antifreeze, paints, battery acid, pet wastes, household cleaning products, and other pollutants. According to a TDEC study, urban runoff from driveways, parking lots, and lawns impacts over 1,000 miles of rivers and streams in Tennessee, ("The Clean Water Challenge: Improving Tennessee's Water Quality By Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution in its Rivers, Lakes and Streams," Vanderbilt Center for Environmental Management Studies (VCEMS), July 2002.)

### Available Tools

Several programs are already in place to address certain specific impacts of land conversion.

**TDEC's Natural Heritage Division** works actively with TDOT, utilities, and businesses to minimize the impact of development projects on plant species by identifying sites with rare, threatened or endangered plants and suggesting alternative site plans and construction practices to preserve them.

Several voluntary programs have been established to address the issue of nonpoint-source pollution.

- **The Tennessee Department of Agriculture** has two grant programs to address nonpoint-source pollution.



Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

- **The Nonpoint Source Program**, funded by the US EPA through the authority of Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, provides grants to install Best Management Practices (BMPs) to stop known sources of nonpoint-source pollution, and to provide training and landowner education. This program is non-regulatory, promoting voluntary, incentive-based solutions.
- **The Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund** provides cost-share assistance to Tennessee landowners to install BMPs that eliminate agricultural nonpoint-source pollution. This assistance is provided through Soil Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development Districts, Watershed Districts, universities, and other groups. Additionally, a portion of this fund is used to provide educational projects statewide, with the focus on landowners, producers, and managers of Tennessee farms and forests.
- **The TDA Forestry Division** assists landowners through education about forest stewardship, management and environmental protection, including BMPs for minimizing nonpoint-source pollution from forestry operations.
- **The US Department of Agriculture's Farmland Protection Program** provides funds to state governments to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural use. Tennessee does not currently participate in this program.
- **The USDA Forest Legacy Program** provides grants to the states to purchase conservation easements or fee acquisition of forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. Tennessee has been active in seeking these funds.

There are additional Federal grant programs too numerous to list here which address many of the specific impacts of land conversion.

Two other tools that have proven successful are land trusts and greenways. Both tools are now being used effectively to set aside undeveloped acreage and mitigate the effects of sprawl, and these efforts are growing in Tennessee.

While all of these programs are essential, they target specific impacts and can only marginally affect the overall results of rapid land conversion.

### Tennessee's Growth Policy Act

The Growth Policy Act of 1998 (PC1101) was the first attempt in Tennessee, and in the whole southeast region for that matter, to address the bigger, more complex questions of how growth itself might be managed. The Act required local governments to prepare growth plans which would define urban growth boundaries and provide for orderly development within those boundaries. As of 2003, all but two Tennessee counties have completed such plans.

One of the goals of this Act was to encourage local governments to deal with the problem of urban sprawl, but up to this point most of the plans have only addressed the question of *where* growth will take place, not *how* it can be managed to minimize adverse impacts. Dan Hawk, Director of Planning Assistance for the Department of Economic and Community Development, has characterized the Act as a first step in managing growth, "a work in progress," (quoted in "Tennessee's Growth Policy Act: Purposes, Implementation, and Effects on Development," by Douglas R. Porter, Growth Management Institute, July, 2002.)

In terms of recreation planning, a major challenge now facing the State is to find effective ways to mitigate the impact of rapid growth on the natural and cultural resource base, so that opportunities to enjoy quality recreation experiences will not become severely diminished in the future. While local governments have the primary responsibility for

shaping their future growth, the State's perspective and professional expertise can play a critical role in this growth management process.

One model for State leadership in this issue might be the Tennessee Interagency Wetlands Committee, which was established by Governor McWherter in 1989 to address the rapid loss of wetlands in the state. Tennessee was one of the two states that led the nation in establishing an Interagency Wetlands Committee. This body, with the help of a related Technical Working Group, developed the State Wetland Conservation Strategy, a coordinated, inter-governmental approach that has proven very successful.

### Implementation strategies

**6.1: The Governor** should establish a **Cabinet-level interagency council** charged with developing growth management policies and coordinating State, Federal and local efforts to mitigate the impacts of growth on Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage. This body should represent all agencies involved in resource management and local planning assistance at the State, Federal, and local levels, including:

- Tennessee Department of Agriculture
- Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Tennessee Department of Transportation
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

- Tennessee Municipal League
- County Services Association

**6.2: This council** should establish a **technical working group** composed of professionals from within their agencies to develop growth mitigation policy proposals and to provide coordinated growth planning and management assistance to local governments. This technical working group should be encouraged to coordinate their efforts with non-governmental organizations involved in regional planning and resource management.

**6.3: This council**, with the assistance of its technical working group, should identify the counties in Tennessee where the impacts of rapid urban growth and land conversion are most acute, and target special outreach initiatives to assist local government officials in these counties. This outreach program may include:

- Providing GIS capabilities to assist local officials in planning more comprehensively, including information about the county's established and potential recreation resource base.
- Providing tools and expertise for analyzing the long-range impacts of various growth scenarios.
- Providing case studies of various growth management outcomes in comparable counties that have faced similar pressures.
- Assisting in the preparation of State and Federal grant applications to help local governments address specific impacts of land conversion.
- Assisting local governments in amending their growth plans to more effectively address the issues of growth management.



***PROPOSAL 7:*****Develop a comprehensive statewide plan for acquisition of recreation lands.**

At key points in Tennessee's history, bold visionary leaders have recognized the vital importance of acquiring recreational resources for the economic prosperity and spiritual well-being of future generations. In 1927 the Tennessee and North Carolina legislatures each voted to provide \$2 million to purchase the land for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The majority of the acreage was owned by 18 timber and pulpwood companies. At that time, much of the mountain land was scarred by aggressive timber harvesting and overgrazing. Those legislators would be astounded to learn that their legacy is now a pristine wilderness that draws over nine million visitors a year and contributes significantly to the economies of both states.

The same kind of visionary leadership gave Tennessee the Cherokee National Forest, the TVA and Corps reservoirs, and an excellent system of State Parks, State Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas. The passage in 1986 of a Real Estate Transfer Tax and subsequent amendments allowed the establishment of three landmark acquisition funds: the Wetlands Acquisition Fund, the State Parks Acquisition Fund, the Local Parks and Recreation Fund, and the Agricultural Resources Fund. The Wetlands and State Parks funds have provided a total of \$97,404,146, which has been invested in acquiring 236,468 acres of land for recreation and conservation. The Local Parks and Recreation Fund has provided over \$29,000,000 for nearly 15,000 projects affecting all 95 Tennessee counties.

This is another critical moment in Tennessee's history. The state's population is growing rapidly (13.5% from 1995 to 2005 according to the US Census) and open space is being converted even more

**Piney Creek Falls, Fall Creek Falls State Resort Park.**

rapidly to developed uses (80,000 acres per year in 1997, according to a USDA study.) These trends are threatening what remains of our recreational resource base. If these trends continue, by 2025 Tennessee will have about 17% more residents than in 2000 and 1.8 million fewer acres of open space.

If the State is to provide for the future needs of its growing population, it must act quickly to acquire prime recreation lands before they are lost to development. Currently several major timber companies are seeking to liquidate their forest lands in Tennessee. These large undeveloped tracts contain prime opportunities for recreation. Likewise many properties that contain rare, threatened or endangered species may soon be developed, with a resulting loss of biodiversity. In addition, the State's investment in State Parks is increasingly threatened with being undermined by private inholdings and development around park borders.

Can an aggressive land acquisition program be justified, especially in a time when budget deficits are threatening vital services? The answer is twofold:

- Public opinion appears to strongly favor acquisition of public recreation lands, even when it entails an increase in taxes.
- Trends in the tourism/recreation industry have made nature-based recreation an engine of economic and community development.

### Public opinion regarding land acquisition

1. A 1999 Frank Luntz poll concluded as follows:

- “No issue speaks more directly to American’s ‘quality of life’ than their ability to enjoy open spaces, parks and wilderness areas.
- “The conservation of land and water and open space is a strong winnable issue,...it should be a major legislative focus this year.
- “88 percent of Americans polled are concerned that many of the country’s special places may be lost unless action is taken now to protect them.
- “Over half of the Americans polled cited an outdoor location, such as a national park, wilderness area, or the beach as their preferred place to spend a vacation this year.
- “85 percent of Americans polled agree that parks and open spaces contribute to the property values and economic stability of neighborhoods.”

2. The Luntz poll findings are supported by actual election results. The Trust for Public Land and The Land Trust Alliance summarized the results of year 2002 votes on local and state conservation spending as follows:

- The active support of American voters for local and state land conservation funding continued to grow in 2002.
- Three-quarters of all local and state conservation-related ballot measures passed: of the 189 measures in 28 states, 141 passed.
- These measures generated \$10 billion in conservation-related funding, including an estimated \$5.7 billion specifically for land acquisition and restoration.
- The approval rate was particularly high in November 2002, when 95 of 112 measures were approved



Cove Lake State Park.

by voters nationwide. This 85 percent approval rate was a marked increase over the 75 percent of measures approved on general election day in November 2001 (*see Table 4.*)

3. Analysis of data gathered for this plan suggests that Tennesseans support acquisition of recreation lands. Responses received during the public workshops ranked land acquisition for future parks and preservation of open space as the second highest priority level.

4. The NSRE survey's recreation activity participation data (*see Table 5*) indicate high preferences among Tennesseans for activities associated with undeveloped land resources.

### Economic Impact of Recreation Land Acquisition

1. The impact of state parks on the Tennessee economy has been estimated by the Tennessee Environmental Council to be \$1.3 billion. This conclusion was based on a study in 1989 by the Georgia Parks Department, which suggested that overnight park visitors in that state spend an average of \$109 per day and day visitors spend an average of \$29.

2. In 2001, state residents and nonresidents spent \$1.7 billion on wildlife-related recreation (wildlife watching, fishing, and hunting) in Tennessee, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's *2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation*.

**Table 4. Results of year 2000 votes for conservation measures, southeastern states**

Location	Amount	Purpose	Vote result
Virginia	\$36.5 million	bond for nature preserves, state parkland	69% yes
Collier Co., FL	\$63.75 million	10-year .25 mill property tax increase to preserve environmentally sensitive land	59% yes
Charleston Co., SC	\$221.5 million	25-year 1/2 cent sales tax for roads,	61% yes

**Table 5. High participation activities relating to undeveloped land**

Activity	Percent Participating	Tennessee participants (millions)
Walk for pleasure	80.9	3.60
View/photograph natural scenery	57.1	2.54
Visit a nature center, nature trail, etc.	53.1	2.36
Sightseeing	51.2	2.28
View/photograph wildlife	45.3	2.02
View/photograph wildflowers, trees, etc.	40.5	1.80
Swimming in lakes, streams, etc.	35.4	1.58
Day hiking	34.2	1.52
Visit a wilderness or primitive area	34.2	1.52
Freshwater fishing	33.5	1.49
View/photograph birds	31.6	1.41

3. A 2002 study of economic impacts of Great Smoky Mountains National Park visitors on the local region (Blount, Cocke, Sevier Co., Tenn. and Graham Co., N.C.) calculated \$340 million in direct sales, 7,775 jobs, and \$131 million in personal income resulting from visitors whose primary trip destination was the park (*see Table 6.*)

4. Nature-based recreation is possibly the most rapidly growing sector of the tourist industry. According to a 2002 study by the Travel Industry Association of America:

- “American travelers love the great outdoors, as evidenced by the nearly 65 million Americans who say they have taken at least one trip of 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home to visit a national or state park and/or forest in the past year.
- “Participating in outdoor activities, including visits to national or state parks, is the second most popular trip activity overall by American travelers.”

Likewise, most of the activities whose popularity grew the fastest between 1995 and 2003, as measured by the NSRE survey, are activities that involve

natural, undeveloped lands and adjacent waters (*see Table 7.*)

## Implementation Strategies

**7.1:** TDEC and TWRA should develop a comprehensive, statewide plan for recreation land acquisition. The primary goals of this plan should be to:

- Identify specific tracts of land with an urgent need for State acquisition, including properties contiguous to existing State Parks, State Park inholdings, large timber company tracts, and properties with outstanding and threatened natural heritage features.
- Identify areas where there is a need for conservation easements or protective buffer zoning to protect parks and natural areas.
- Define the context of these proposed acquisitions, showing how they can be linked by greenways to leverage the existing supply of public lands and

**Table 6. Economic impacts of Great Smoky Mountain National Park visitors on the local region**

Sector/spending category	Direct sales (\$000s)	Jobs	Personal income (\$000s)	Value added (\$000s)
Motel, hotel cabin or B&B	98,644	1,946	37,676	57,750
Camping fees	4,764	94	1,819	2,789
Restaurants & bars	77,490	2,105	27,450	38,957
Admissions & fees	32,052	1,011	12,321	19,168
Retail Trade	39,034	1,179	18,941	30,482
Wholesale Trade	5,772	97	2,349	4,041
Local Production of goods	3,650			
Direct effects	261,405	6,432	100,557	153,186
Secondary effects	79,130	1,342	30,614	52,561
Multiplier	<u>1.30</u>	<u>1.21</u>	<u>1.30</u>	<u>1.34</u>
Total impact	340,535	7,775	131,171	205,748

(Economic Impacts of Great Smoky Mtn. National Park Visitors on the Local Region, 1997-2000, Daniel J. Styne, Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, Michigan State University, 2002)



further the goals of a seamless Tennessee Recreation System (*see Proposal 1: Tennessee Recreation System.*)

- Identify opportunities to use alternative means of acquiring recreation lands, such as land swaps for acquisition of inholdings.

**7.2: The Governor** should provide leadership in establishing dedicated funding sources for State acquisition of recreation properties identified in the statewide acquisition plan. Options to consider may include:

- A bond issue dedicated to land acquisition.
- Renewed full funding for the Wetlands Acquisition Fund, the State Parks Acquisition Fund, the Local Parks Acquisition Fund, and the Agricultural Resources Fund.
- A State Parks Foundation to seek individual, corporate and foundation funding for acquisitions and easements to enhance and protect State Parks.

**Fiery Gizzard Trail, South Cumberland State Park.**



**Table 7. Fast growing activities that relate to undeveloped land**

Activity	Percent participating, 1995	Percent participating, 2003	Percent change, 1995-2003
View or photograph fish	11.8	21.5	104.3
View wildlife	28.2	45.3	77.9
Rafting, canoeing, kayaking	13.3	21.2	77.0
Day hiking	23.0	34.2	65.2
Primitive camping	11.3	15.3	51.1
Developed camping	17.6	24.0	50.7
Walk for pleasure	62.9	80.9	42.9
Backpacking	7.5	9.4	40.0

### **PROPOSAL 8:** **Restore the State Scenic Rivers Program.**

Rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing are activities which share a common recreation resource: rivers. The participation data analyzed for this plan indicates that this activity group engages an estimated 940,000 Tennesseans, or 21% of the state's population. In addition, this activity group is among the fastest growing, having a 77% increase in participation between 1995 and 2003 (*see Demand*.) One possible reason for the high popularity of river floating in Tennessee may be the abundance of streams that are high in both scenic quality and recreational boating quality (*see Recreation Supply*.) which represent major public recreation resources for the state.

#### **Tennessee's State Scenic Rivers Program**

With the passage of the landmark Tennessee Scenic Rivers Act in 1968, Tennessee became the first state in the nation to give formal protection to its recreational rivers. That law subsequently served as the model for the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

At the time of its passage, there were portions of nine rivers in Tennessee that were designated as State Scenic Rivers. Then the program began to receive resistance from local landowners who were concerned about its possible implications. Between 1969 and 1984, three of the rivers were de-designated due to local pressure, while two more were added to the program. The only significant addition to the program since 1970 has been the designation of portions of the Duck River. In 2000, due to lack of program staff, the Scenic Rivers Program was transferred within TDEC from State Parks to the Natural Heritage division.

After years of decline, this program has now entered a rebuilding phase. As the Scenic Rivers program is revived, it is faced with the need to address two basic functions: management of the rivers to

provide high quality recreational opportunity for the public, and protection of the rivers' water quality and viewsheds through effective watershed stewardship. TDEC has considerable expertise in both areas. However, rebuilding the program will also require additional funding and the attention of a full-time Scenic Rivers Coordinator position within TDEC.

#### **Implementation strategies**

**8.1:** TDEC should establish a Scenic Rivers Coordinator position charged with:

- Forming and managing partnerships that leverage existing resources to assist in tasks relating to the Scenic Rivers.
- Recruiting and coordinating volunteer stewards for each river.
- Negotiating riparian landowner agreements as needed to protect water quality.
- Disseminating information about the State Scenic Rivers for recreational users.
- Ensuring that each State Scenic River will provide a consistent level of quality experiences for the public and serve as a key component of the seamless Tennessee Recreation System.



Ocoee River, Hiwassee Scenic River State Park.

### **PROPOSAL 9: Continue to implement the Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan.**

Several activities which involve greenways and trails ranked in the highest participation category in the NSRE data (*see Table 8.*)

Likewise, participants in this plan's public workshops ranked greenways in the second highest priority category.

Fortunately, Tennessee now has a *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* (*see 5\_Greenways\_plan.pdf*) and is well on its way toward satisfying the public's need for greenways and trails. The following description contains excerpts from that plan.

The greenways and trails concept is neither new nor unique to Tennessee. In Tennessee, the first "greenway" was the Appalachian Trail, proposed in 1921. Since then greenways and trails have become a way of life for many Tennesseans – a way to explore the beauty and treasures of Tennessee.

In 1968, two significant trail-related events occurred in Tennessee. First, the *National Trails System Act* was passed by Congress designating national scenic, historic and recreation trails. The

Appalachian Trail was designated as one of the first National Scenic Trails, along with the Pacific Crest Trail along the Pacific coast.

Second, several dedicated hiking enthusiasts met at Cumberland Mountain State Park and created a statewide organization called the Tennessee Trails Association (TTA). Working with key legislators, their efforts led to the passage of the 1971 *Tennessee Trails System Act*. The 1971 act created state scenic trails and a state recreation trails system. The current designated state scenic trails include: the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the Cumberland State Scenic Trail, the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, the John Muir State Scenic Trail, the Trail of the Lonesome Pine State Scenic Trail, the Chickasaw Bluffs State Scenic Trail, the Natchez Trace, and the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

The latest impetus for greenways and trails began in the mid-1980's with the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. The commission called for the "establishment of a network of greenways across America." The Tennesseans Outdoors Report followed this mission by recommending the establishment of four statewide north/south recreation corridors, the accelerated implemen-

**Table 8. High participation activities that relate to greenways and trails**

Activity	Percent Participating	Number of Participants (millions)
Walking for pleasure	80.9	3.60
Viewing/photographing natural scenery	57.1	2.54
Picnicking	55.6	2.47
Visiting a nature center, nature trail, zoo	53.1	2.36
Viewing/photographing other wildlife	45.3	2.02
Viewing/photographing wildflower, trees, etc.	40.5	1.80
Running or jogging	34.7	1.54
Day Hiking	34.2	1.52
Viewing/photographing birds	31.6	1.41
Bicycling	29.1	1.30

tation of the *Tennessee Scenic Rivers Act of 1968* and the *Tennessee Trails System Act of 1971*, the development of bicycle trails, the conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails, and the formation of urban greenway and trail programs.

For the past two decades, communities across the state have developed trails and greenways for recreation, natural and cultural resource protection and community enhancement. These efforts have provided numerous trails and protected corridors of open space throughout Tennessee.

### **Development of the *Greenways and Trails Plan***

The most vocal public recreation issue that emerged during the development of the *1995-1999 Tennessee State Recreation Plan* was the need for a statewide greenways and trails system. Citizens wanted better access to existing trails and new trail

development. The issues that arose were as varied as the types of trails. Walkers, runners, canoeists, skaters, on- and off-road cyclists, and off-highway motorized vehicle enthusiasts all agreed on the need for statewide coordination of greenway and trail development.

Coinciding with the demand for trail opportunities, a new, local grassroots movement emerged in Tennessee during the early 1990's – the creation of local greenways. These linear corridors of open space compliment the creation of trails. Greenways and trails are not synonymous, but opportunities for greenways and trails to co-exist and benefit one another continue to grow.

In 1996, in celebration of Tennessee's Bicentennial, the administration proposed a statewide system of greenways and trails. Communities across Tennessee were challenged to plan and develop local greenways and trails and to establish interagency partnerships that would link the new greenways in a comprehensive statewide system.

In 1998, a Governor's Council on Greenways and Trails was convened to oversee the development of a *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* and to address critical issues in the implementation of a statewide system. The Department of Environment and Conservation was charged with developing the plan.

The current Governor's Council was appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen and formally recognized by a Governor's charter in 2003. This council is composed of diverse representation of users of motorized, non-motorized and multi-use trails from across the state. Representatives include conservation, natural resources, industry and farming interests, as well as related State and Federal government agencies.



**Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park.**



### Key Goals of the *Greenways Plan*

- Establish a statewide system of greenways and trails connecting Tennessee's most precious resources to our communities and greenway conservation corridors that protect wildlife habitat and migration patterns, buffer waterways, and enhance the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the state.
- Encourage communities to develop local trails and trail plans in coordination with surrounding communities. Expand opportunities and modify policies so that every community in the state has opportunities to do so.
- Re-establish dedicated full-time Greenways and Trails support positions within the Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the Department of Transportation (TDOT) to provide technical and educational assistance to agencies and organizations implementing the greenways and trails plan.
- Encourage TDEC, TDOT, TWRA, TDOA and Federal partners to coordinate efforts to develop statewide greenways and trails; and maximize the use of public/private partnerships.
- Create permanent funding mechanisms to support the establishment of a statewide system of greenways and trails.
- Make Tennessee's roadways bicycle and pedestrian friendly and encourage alternative transportation.
- Create a statewide off-highway vehicle (OHV) program to increase opportunities for motorized recreation.
- Establish a greenways and trails information and education clearinghouse within TDEC.
- Provide accessible trails for persons with disabilities and people of all ages.

- Continue to develop the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park as a major component of the statewide greenways and trails system.
- Preserve Tennessee's abandoned railroad corridors for recreation opportunities today and possible future transportation opportunities.

### Progress since the *Greenways Plan*

Since the publication of the *Greenways and Trails Plan*, many of the goals of the plan have been accomplished:

- The Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park, a long distance trail that crosses the state from north to south, linking many of Tennessee's parks and natural areas, is well on its way to completion. The State has invested \$20 million to acquire property and easements for the trail, and about 140 miles of the trail have been completed.
- TDOT has established a bicycle coordinator position, allowing better coordination of opportunities for alternative forms of transportation.
- TDEC has undertaken a study of the needs of Off-Highway Vehicle users and developed a set of recommendations (*see 7\_Off\_highway.pdf*)
- TDEC has placed a high priority on local greenway and trail projects in its OPSP scoring system for LWCF grant applications. The department has provided grants to local governments to build numerous projects. Each of these projects has included provisions for handicap accessibility, and many have included public/private partnerships.

However, many of the Plan's goals remain unrealized, and it is the intent of this proposal to renew the momentum of this important initiative.

**Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.****TDOT Multimodal Study**

An important new development in this area is the Tennessee Department of Transportation's new statewide long-range multimodal study, to be completed in 18 months beginning in 2004. The goal of this study is to ensure that the state's long-term transportation needs will be met and that transportation planning will be consistent with community interests. The study will encompass all forms of transportation and their complimentary and supporting relationships, including waterways, bicycle trails, and pedestrian facilities. A major component of this study will be comprehensive public involvement efforts to ensure that all citizens have an opportunity to offer ideas and opinions.

**Implementation Strategies**

**9.1:** The Governor's Council on Greenways and Trails should reconvene and review progress toward implementing the *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan*, make needed recommendations, and continue to provide leadership in its implementation.

**9.2:** TDEC should reinstate the Greenways and

Trails Coordinator position in that department, with the following responsibilities:

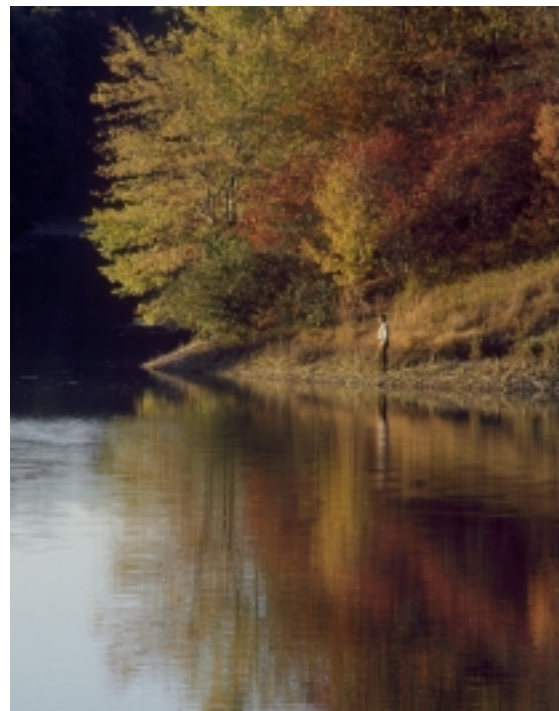
- Coordinate the implementation of the *Tennessee Greenways & Trails Plan*.
- Work cooperatively with **TWRA** to develop a GIS database documenting existing greenways and trails statewide and opportunities to create new ones.
- Work cooperatively with the **Tennessee Historical Commission, the Tennessee Wars Commission, and the National Park Service** to identify old wagon trails associated with Tennessee history, and add geographic data about these trails to the greenway GIS database. Priority should be given to trails of greatest national significance and greatest potential for historical heritage tourism, such as the Trail of Tears, the Great Wagon Road (Avery Trace, Walton Road), Natchez Trace, and the routes of march of troops engaged at major Civil War battles.
- Organize education and technical assistance efforts for conservation greenways and recreation trails.

**9.3:** TDEC should encourage the establishment of additional greenways and trails by local, State and Federal agencies, by the following means:

- Have **PARTAS** and the **Greenways Coordinator** assist local agencies in identifying potential greenway/trail opportunities and train them in design guidelines and maintenance practices. This effort should include analysis of the GIS greenways data managed by TWRA to identify opportunities to create greenways and trails that will link recreation assets in the local area.
- Coordinate with other State and Federal agencies to identify opportunities to connect their recreation assets through a statewide system of greenways and trails (*see Proposal 1: Tennessee Recreation System.*)
- Coordinate with **ECD** to identify and pursue opportunities to acquire land for greenways through the FEMA/TEMA flood hazard mitigation program.
- Continue to place an emphasis on greenways and trails through grant programs and dedicated funding sources. Grant programs should prioritize greenways/trails grant projects that link existing Federal, State, local parklands, and schools, provide alternate transportation and that will be an integral part in creating a statewide greenways and trails system.
- Implement proposals of the Governor's *Off-highway Vehicle Study*. The key proposal of this study calls for new State legislation regarding off-highway vehicle trails and users which creates a dedicated State funding source for motorized trail development, management and maintenance through OHV user fees or gasoline tax revenue from off-highway vehicle use. It also proposes that the administration of this program be designated under a state agency.

**9.4:** The **TDOT Bicycle Coordinator** should continue to plan new bicycle routes and disseminate information on established bike routes in Tennessee. Further, the new TDOT multimodal study should seek to make Tennessee's roadways more accommodating to bicyclists and pedestrians, and its river crossings more accessible for paddlers.

**Local greenway trail.**



**Davy Crockett Birthplace State Park.**

***PROPOSAL 10:***  
**Continue to fund and implement  
 Tennessee's Wetlands Conservation  
 Strategy.**

Wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide important recreation-related benefits, including:

- Active recreation. Wetlands provide unique opportunities for boating, fishing, and hunting.
- Environmental education. Healthy wetlands have a primitive, wilderness quality which makes them excellent places for environmental education and wildlife observation.
- Water quality enhancement. Wetlands enhance the quality of recreational waters by reducing the concentration of sediments and nutrients caused by run-off.
- Biological productivity. Wetlands contribute to biodiversity and the viability of wildlife populations by providing habitat needed by a diverse array of species. Tennessee has 140 rare wetland-dependent species, including 115 rare animal species and 25 rare plant species.

For much of Tennessee's history, wetlands have been treated not as valuable assets but as liabilities which needed to be drained, filled, and channelized to facilitate development, flood control and other purposes. A national study in 1956 described Tennessee as having 447,600 acres of "high quality" wetland habitat, ranking the state sixth in the nation, surpassed only by Minnesota, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and North Dakota. But an analysis of status and trends undertaken as part of the 1990 National

Wetlands Inventory estimated that Tennessee had lost 59% of its original wetlands base by the mid 1980's. During the 1980's, the State responded to the rapid loss of wetlands with two major initiatives: the Wetlands Acquisition Fund and the Interagency Wetlands Committee.

### **Wetlands Acquisition Fund**

In 1986 the Tennessee Legislature authorized the Wetlands Acquisition Fund. Money for this fund came from an increase of \$0.04 per \$100.00 in the Real Estate Transfer Tax. Thanks to this dedicated funding source, the State has realized the following benefits:

- The purchase of 189,968 acres of wetlands.
- Payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PLT) to 40 counties, totalling \$1,415,374 as of 2003, to compensate for property tax revenues lost to wetlands preservation.
- The State match for Federal Forest Legacy dollars, used to make it economically feasible for private, non-industrial landowners to keep their lands in forest.
- A ready market for farmers wishing to sell or enhance their land.
- Leveraging of State dollars to take maximum advantage of Federal funding. In many cases, the Wetland Fund was used for only part of the purchase price, but without those dollars Tennessee would not have had the required match for the Federal funds. Specific examples include:
  - John Tully WMA (West Tennessee): The first phase of this acquisition totaled 4,198 acres valued at \$9,000,000. Through partnering with the federal government and non-government



**Monroe County local natural area.**

agencies, this area was acquired with \$3,563,000 of wetland funds.

- International Paper land (Cumberland Plateau): This 74,000 area was appraised at \$13,600,000. Utilizing federal and non-government funding for much of the purchase, TWRA acquired this area for \$3,453,500 of wetland funds.

As part of an effort to balance the State budget in 2003, the Wetlands Acquisition Fund was diverted to the general fund. Proposal 7 of this State Recreation Plan recommends a resumption of the State's policy of providing a dedicated funding source for acquisition of prime recreation lands (*see Proposal 7: Acquisition of Recreation Lands*)

**Interagency Wetlands Committee**

Wetlands preservation functions are fragmented among many agencies. For this reason, a critical component of the State's response to the loss of

wetlands was to encourage greater coordination and cooperative action across agency lines. Accordingly, in 1989, the Governor appointed an Interagency Wetlands Committee (IWC) to evaluate the status of Tennessee's wetlands and recommend steps to curb the loss of wetlands in the state. The work of the IWC and its Technical Working Group led to the development of Tennessee's Wetland Conservation Strategy, which continues to serve as the State's guiding framework for wetlands protection.

The Wetlands Strategy was updated in 1995 and again in 1998, and the Governor has called for a new update. In 2003, the Governor assigned the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, in coordination with the Governor's Policy Office, the role of lead agency for directing the ongoing efforts of the IWC and for ensuring follow-up implementation of the Strategy.

### **Wetlands Conservation Strategy: Goal, Objectives, and Accomplishments**

The primary goal of the State Wetlands Strategy is to achieve no overall net loss of wetlands acreage and functions in each USGS hydrologic unit. The Wetlands Strategy proposes several broad objectives for achieving this goal.

**1. Collect and manage data to characterize the state's wetland resource base more completely, and identify exceptional sites for acquisition or restoration.**

This objective includes maintenance of a GIS-based wetlands database, research, analysis and long-term monitoring of status and trends. TWRA has played the primary data management role, working in close cooperation with other agencies to pool wetlands data. TWRA has now digitized 100% of the maps of Tennessee's known wetlands and entered that data into the wetlands GIS.

The TDEC Division of Natural Heritage has contributed extensive data on rare and endangered species and on wetlands along major river corridors

The wetlands database has been used to compile a master list of candidate sites to be evaluated as exceptional wetlands. This information is routinely shared among all related agencies: TWRA, TDOT, TDEC, ECD, USCOE, USFWS, USGS, and TVA.

**2. Acquire unique, exceptionally high quality, or scarce wetland community types and sites.**

Tennessee's Wetland Acquisition Act provides for wetlands to be prioritized for acquisition with State funds based on their qualities and functions as opposed to targeting specific wetland types. Accordingly, under the Wetlands Strategy's acquisition scoring system, each candidate site is ranked according to its individual characteristics. The following five factors warrant the highest priority ranking:



TWRA Wildlife Management Area, Tennessee River.

- Wetlands of exceptionally high quality,
- Wetlands that provide habitat for a threatened or endangered species,
- Wetlands that represent an extremely rare type in Tennessee due to character or location,
- Wetlands that are threatened with immediate and permanent degradation,
- Wetlands whose acquisition contributes to the North American Waterfowl Plan, the National Wetlands Priority, or another cooperative program.

TWRA has been the lead agency in acquiring wetlands through the State's Wetland Acquisition Fund. The agency includes other agencies' and organizations' priorities when making acquisition decisions. The Agency has acquired almost all wetlands which have been identified as high priority and have had willing sellers. In addition, TWRA has included the USFWS in joint venture efforts to identify tracts of wetlands contiguous with their existing projects for acquisition. The two agencies have also jointly identified and agreed upon tracts necessary to develop the Reelfoot Sediment Basin, with each agency sharing equally the necessary acquisitions.

TDEC-Natural Heritage has also worked in partnership with TWRA to increase protection of rare, high quality wetlands under the Tennessee Natural Areas Preservation Act. Approximately 275 acres in Hardin County and approximately 110 acres in Polk County, both owned by TWRA, have received such protection. The Tennessee Nature Conservancy (TNC) frequently assists the state's acquisition program. Increasingly, grass roots organizations like the Wolf River Conservancy have led local fundraising efforts to purchase significant

wetlands. Cooperation and assistance has also come from regional organizations like the Conservation Fund.

### **3. Restore and enhance wetlands to offset previous losses and increase the resource base.**

In addition to protecting wetlands through state acquisition, the Wetlands Strategy calls for enhancement and restoration of existing wetlands, and creation of new wetlands. This broad objective has been achieved through two means:

- Programs that provide funds to help private landowners to restore or enhance their wetlands. A good example of this approach is the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service's wetlands restoration cost-share program.
- Water quality regulation programs that require restoration of existing wetlands or creation of new wetlands to offset losses (mitigation.) The USCOE and TDEC-Water Pollution Control are the agencies engaged in this kind of regulatory activity.

### **4. Increase motivation of private landowners to protect wetlands.**

Since the majority of the state's wetland resources are currently in private ownership, a key objective of the Strategy is to give private wetland owners the information they need to make informed management decisions that will satisfy their needs while protecting wetlands functions.

The Strategy calls for the State to collect and share information about wetlands, and to offer technical assistance to private landowners. TWRA provides assistance to private landowners for waterfowl food crops and also technical and financial assistance through the Tennessee Partners Project (TPP) for landowner management of waterfowl habitat.

**Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park.****5. Use the water quality permitting process to protect existing wetlands and add to the State's wetland base.**

The Strategy recognizes the need for an effective State and Federal regulatory program, and presents recommendations for improving water quality standards, record keeping, and follow-up of mitigation projects. Implementation of this objective has produced improved regulatory guidelines and wetland mitigation banks to replace lost wetlands.

TDEC's Division of Water Pollution Control has worked with TDOT, other resource agencies, and the private sector to develop seven wetlands mitigation banks across the state as part of the water quality permitting process. The Division also works with local governments, school systems, and communities to establish wetlands on public property as part of the permitting process. The Division has developed a separate database of wetland mitigation sites and is systematically tracking these projects.

In its most recent revision of Water Quality Standards, the Division proposed designation of

wetlands adjacent to Reelfoot Lake as Outstanding National Resource Waters. The Division has also drafted wetlands water quality standards as encouraged by EPA.

**6. Create more urban riparian areas, wetland greenways, and wildlife corridors.**

The *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* contains implementation steps designed to fulfill this objective (see *Proposal 9: Greenways and Trails*). In addition, TDEC-RES continues to use its grants program to encourage wetland preservation through state and local greenway projects.

**7. Increase wetlands information delivery to local governments, the public, and schools.**

TDEC, TWRA, and all other wetland-related agencies are working on an ongoing basis to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of the public for wetlands. TWRA works actively to build public support for wetlands acquisition in conjunction with their wetlands acquisition program, particularly as it relates to uses by sportsmen. TDA Division of Forestry has increased its emphasis on



protecting wetlands in forestry operations through training and demonstration projects. Many private organizations and other state and federal agencies are conducting programs and educational activities regarding wetlands.

### Status of Wetlands Preservation

Tennessee's approach to wetland preservation has proven to be very effective. Since the mid-1980s, the State has acquired a total of 189,968 acres of wetlands and set aside over 1,000 acres in mitigation banks. In addition, the rate of wetland loss has been lowered dramatically, and the State is now within range of achieving the overall goal of no net loss of wetlands.

Since the 1995 State Recreation Plan, the Tennessee wetlands regulatory program has had the following significant accomplishments:

- A wetlands mitigation banking system has been established in Tennessee. Seven banks have been established, with at least one in each grand division of the state. The mitigation banks have the advantage of restoring and preserving larger tracts of wetlands, many of which will come into public ownership. As such, they will provide a higher level of recreational benefit as well as better habitat/ecological function. At present, the wetland mitigation banking system comprises more than 1000 acres.
- In June of 1999, a review of previously permitted wetland mitigation projects was completed by Tennessee Technological University. The project was funded with a wetlands program development grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The report found that some of the earlier permitted projects had failed to fully achieve the intended outcome, but that, on balance, the regulatory program was achieving essentially one for one replacement of wetlands. The report also identified other weaknesses in the regulatory program that have resulted in ongoing improvements.

- In November of 2000, rules governing the implementation of the wetlands regulatory program became effective. For the first time at the state level, wetlands were defined in rule, and a "no net loss of water resource value" permitting standard was established.
- TDEC-Natural Heritage acquired two wetland tracts totaling 392 acres at Sunk Lake State Natural Area (Lauderdale County) in 2000, and one wetland tract totaling 219 acres at the Ghost River State Natural Area (Fayette County) in 2001.
- In 2003, TWRA completed the latest in a series of Biennial Wetlands Reports.

Thanks to the ongoing work of the Interagency Wetlands Committee, most of the original objectives of the Wetlands Strategy have been fully or partially achieved. Tennessee is now entering a new phase in its long-term wetlands protection program.

### Implementation Strategies

**10.1: The Governor** should continue to encourage and support the roles of TDEC and the Governor's Policy Office in leading the next phase of implementation of the Tennessee Wetlands Strategy.

## ***Ensure Consistent Quality throughout the Tennessee Recreation System***

### ***PROPOSAL 11:***

#### **Renovate and maintain state and local recreation facilities.**

One of the goals of the proposed seamless Tennessee Recreation System is: “to establish consistent standards...for all recreation sites, so that the public can depend on a reliable level of quality at any site they visit.”

Consistent standards and reliable quality depend in part on adequate maintenance of recreation facilities. This planning process has found high public demand for maintaining facilities and renovating ones that are substandard. The public workshop participants gave maintenance the highest priority among all needs relating to recreation facilities. And the local agencies surveyed ranked maintenance and renovation as their second highest priority need. Responding to this high public demand for maintenance and renovation, this plan has assessed the status of maintenance and renovation needs in Tennessee’s state and local parks.

#### **State Parks**

Since the creation of the Tennessee State Parks system in 1938, the State has made a significant investment in capital assets for the system. The majority of the State’s developed parks were acquired between 1938 and 1970, and their average age is 46 years (*see Table 9.*)

This parks system now contains over 1400 structures comprising approximately 3.7 million square feet and currently valued at approximately \$350 million. These structures include:

- 102 picnic shelters
- 165 ranger residences
- 346 cabins

- 13 restaurants
- 616 inn rooms
- 88 restroom structures
- 127 bathhouse structures
- 34 swimming pools

In addition, the park structures contain fixtures and furnishings currently valued at approximately \$30 million.

Stewardship of these assets requires ongoing maintenance activity to protect the State’s investment and ensure the continued quality of the public’s State Park experience. TDEC receives an annual general appropriation for maintenance of these structures; however, with the exception of a 3-year special appropriation in FY 1998-2000, the general trend in these appropriations been an average decline of \$200,000 per year over the last 13 years.

TDEC has estimated that, even if all State Park structures were newly constructed, the current funding level would not be sufficient to maintain them properly. But the structures are not new; many are old, and 15% are CCC and WPA structures built more than 60 years ago. As aging park structures have required increasing repairs and renovation, the decline in maintenance appropriations has resulted in an ever-widening shortfall. The long-term net effect of this shortfall is a current maintenance and renovation backlog estimated at nearly \$100 million for the State Parks system as a whole.

A backlog of this scale means that the basic quality of Tennessee’s State Parks is now threatened. The State Parks are the number one attraction for the state’s tourism industry, which generates \$10.4 billion annually and 176,000 jobs, according to the Department of Tourist Development. Run-down park facilities reflect negatively on Tennessee and can put the state at a competitive disadvantage in the regional tourism market.

**Table 9. State Parks - year acquired and age in 2003**

Park	Year acquired	Age
Booker T. Washington State Rec. Area	1938	65
Cumberland Mt. State Rustic Park	1938	65
Harrison Bay State Rec. Area	1938	65
T.O. Fuller State Rec. Area	1938	65
Cedars Of Lebanon State Park & Forest	1939	64
Natchez Trace State Resort Park	1939	64
Standing Stone State Rustic Park	1939	64
Chickasaw State Park	1940	63
Cove Lake State Rec. Area	1940	63
Montgomery Bell State Park	1943	60
Fall Creek Falls State Resort Park	1944	59
Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park	1944	59
Paris Landing State Resort Park	1945	58
Big Ridge State Rustic Park	1949	54
Pickett State Rustic Park	1949	54
Norris Dam State Resort Park	1952	51
Warriors Path State Rec. Area	1952	51
Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park	1956	47
Henry Horton State Resort Park	1961	42
Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park	1963	40
Big Hill Pond State Environmental Ed. Area	1965	38
Panther Creek State Park	1967	36
Roan Mountain State Rustic Park	1967	36
Pickwick Landing State Resort Park	1970	33
Rock Island State Rustic Park	1971	32
Bledsoe Creek State Rec. Area	1972	31
Long Hunter Site Rec. Area	1972	31
Edgar Evins State Rustic Park	1975	28
Tims Ford State Rustic Park	1975	28
Fort Loudoun State Park	1977	26
Indian Mountain Campground State Rec. Area	1977	26

**Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park.**

### Local parks

In some communities the local parks are also showing the effects of inadequate funding for annual maintenance. PARTAS field representatives have reported several instances of projects built with LWCF grants from the State which are now showing signs of neglect within a few years. The terms of LWCF grants require ongoing maintenance of facilities. However, local governments often assume that getting a grant will help them solve all their unmet recreation needs, and they fail to give thought or planning to providing for ongoing maintenance. This problem is reflected in this plan's feedback from local governments: the agencies ranked new facilities as their top priority need, and ranked maintenance as their second highest need. Apparently these agencies do not see a contradiction in calling for more new

facilities when they are having difficulties maintaining the ones they already have.

This problem is more acute in communities that lack a professional recreation director, who can serve as an advocate for sound management and maintenance of facilities. In such communities, a city council or county commission is more likely to cut recreation spending or not allocate the maintenance dollars necessary for their park system. When this happens, the state's investment in local park facilities and the public's access to quality recreation are undermined by the lack of support.

TDEC-RES-PARTAS provides the following technical assistance services to local governments in the area of maintenance and renovation:

- Providing guidance and a template in designing a department's maintenance plan.



Roan Mountain State Park.



- Assisting directors in developing a formula to assess the costs/benefits of their current maintenance budget and structure.
- Providing ADA compliance advice to local governments when they are in the process of planning new construction or renovating current facilities.
- Providing standards and guidance for playground safety in the renovation of playground areas and structures.

### Renovation and ADA compliance

There are currently an estimated 1,149,693 people over age four with disabilities in Tennessee, representing 20% of the state's population (US Census 2000.) The National Survey of Recreation and the Environment allows some insight into the participation of disabled people in various recreation activities. The national data from this survey suggest that disabled people spend more days per year participating in recreation than non-disabled people, possibly because they have fewer time constraints than the non-disabled. The proportion of disabled people participating in the following activities is higher than that for the non-disabled:

- Swimming outdoors
- Nature study
- Cultural and historical activities

In addition, the NSRE data indicates that the disabled spent more days per year than the non-disabled in the following activities:

- Walking
- Swimming in a pool
- Horseback riding
- Fishing
- Day hiking
- Viewing birds and other wildlife
- Primitive camping (participation by the disabled is higher among younger age groups only)

These data suggest that disabled people are far

more active in recreation than one might suppose.

After 2011, when the Baby Boom generation will begin to turn 65, the proportion of older people in the population will grow dramatically, causing the number of people with disabilities to increase as well. Thus, it can be anticipated that, in the coming years, there will be an ever-greater demand for access to the state's recreation facilities by disabled Tennesseans and non-residents. Clearly, it is critical that this sizeable portion of the population have access to State and local recreation facilities.

Since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1992, all newly constructed public facilities have been required to meet Federal standards of accessibility for people with disabilities. Pre-existing facilities are required to upgrade to ADA standards when they are being renovated. All State Parks facilities built since 1992 are ADA compliant, but many of the parks' older facilities have not been renovated and do not meet these standards. As overdue maintenance and renovation is required on these facilities, they will be required to be upgraded to ADA compliance. It has been estimated that meeting these requirements will cost approximately \$27 million in additional renovation costs.

Likewise, all local facilities constructed since 1992, including those built with LWCF grants have been required to comply with the ADA accessibility standards. As local governments apply for grants to renovate their facilities, TDEC-RES ensures that ADA compliance is part of the renovation plans. PARTAS provides local governments with technical assistance for ADA compliance, advising them on how to apply the Federal standards and guidelines. However, there are many older local recreation facilities that have not been upgraded to ADA standards, and TDEC and PARTAS will need to continue their efforts to encourage compliance by local facilities. Participants at this plan's public workshops ranked retrofitting for ADA compliance as the highest priority among all accessibility issues.

**Natchez Trace State Park.****Edgar Evins State Park.**

### Implementation strategies

**11.1:** Recognizing that protecting the State's investment requires an immediate solution to the State Parks renovation and maintenance backlog, **the Governor's office** should explore funding options for addressing the estimated \$127 million backlog of renovation and maintenance expenses in the State Parks, including \$27 million for upgrading to comply with the ADA standards.

**11.2:** TDEC-RES should give special consideration in the Grant Program's Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) to all grant applications that propose renovation and rehabilitation of existing local facilities.

**11.3:** TDEC-RES should develop a set of well-defined performance standards for grant recipients, detailing their accountability for ongoing maintenance of funded facilities, and should ensure that applicants commit to compliance with these standards before receiving funding.

**11.4:** TDEC-RES should enforce these standards by continuing the requirement that all grant applications detail the facility's projected annual maintenance costs and identify funding sources for those expenses. Grant recipients should also be required to present TDEC with annual budgets that adequately provide for ongoing maintenance. TDEC may consider using the grant recipient's eligibility for future grant funding as a compliance mechanism.

**11.5:** TDEC-RES should ensure that all local facility renovation projects funded by all grant programs will include upgrading to ADA compliance, and **PARTAS** should continue to provide technical assistance to local governments in meeting ADA standards.

**PROPOSAL 12:****Develop an improved system for the most effective use of TDEC recreation grants.**

This Plan's survey of local governments indicated, by a large majority, that recreational facilities are their most critical need and that lack of funding is the primary barrier to providing better recreation in their communities. Development of this plan has initiated a more in-depth process of documenting the existing supply of local recreation lands and facilities (*see Recreation Supply*.) While the data is not yet complete enough to allow firm conclusions, it does suggest that there may be many areas of Tennessee where the local supply of recreation facilities is inadequate. Likewise, as noted in Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain, some local governments seek funding for new facilities without planning for the cost of maintaining them. TDEC has an opportunity to use its recreation grants programs to address these critical issues.

**TDEC grants programs**

TDEC administers several grants programs which award funds to local governments and state parks for indoor and outdoor recreation projects, land acquisition, and trail development. These grants programs include:

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF),
- The Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF),
- The Recreation Trails Program (RTP),
- The Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF).

This combination of LWCF grants (which provide funding for outdoor public recreation projects) and the various other State and Federal funding mechanisms has played a major role in

providing new recreation opportunities for Tennesseans. Since the LWCF's inception in 1965, the department has awarded a total of \$62 million in LWCF grants, with 51% going to local projects and 49% going to State projects. Under the LPRF, the department has awarded \$29.5 million to local projects and \$32.5 million to State projects. The department has awarded a total of \$747,000 from the NRTF.

State agencies and local governments make applications for these grants to TDEC-RES, which selects projects to fund using a scoring system called the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). The goal of this system is to identify projects that will:

- Conform with the State's overall recreation priorities,
- Address the actual recreation needs and priorities of the local community and receive local support,
- Receive competent administration and regular maintenance to ensure the facility will actually serve the citizens on an ongoing basis and maintain acceptable standards of quality.

The OPSP is adjusted periodically to reflect changes in policy. For example, when the *Greenways and Trails Plan* was adopted in 2001, the OPSP was adjusted to award extra points to greenways and trails projects.

The grants program as administered thus far has concerned itself generally with projects that are presented to it in the form of submitted applications, and these are often not projects that address Tennessee's most severe recreation needs. Despite the past successes of the grants program, many of Tennessee's rural communities are still severely lacking in the recreation services they need. Many local officials simply do not consider a recreation grant to be something they need or should seek. Others do not have professional staff who are equipped to prepare a successful grant application. And others apply for grants, but their proposed

projects do not have enough merit to compete for funding successfully.

TDEC has an opportunity to begin using the LWCF grants program more strategically and proactively to assist those communities in Tennessee that have the most severe needs and to fill in the most glaring gaps in the proposed Tennessee Recreation System. Likewise, the Tennessee State Parks system could benefit from LWCF dollars over the next several years by spending the state's allocation in a much needed priority area – rehabilitation and renovation of current major facilities within State Parks (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*)

## Implementation Strategies

**12.1:** TDEC-RES and PARTAS should develop an improved system for making the most strategically effective use of recreation grants. This process may include the following strategies:

- Identify and assist locations with the most severe recreation resource deficits.
- Continue to capture new data on existing local facilities and enter this into the database of Recreation Supply which has been developed for this plan.
- Analyze the recreation supply, comparing each county's supply data with its population figures to identify the counties and communities with the most severe recreation resource deficits.
  - Provide outreach to these counties, offering them technical assistance in developing local recreation delivery systems, preparing LWCF grant



Local skate park.

applications, forming Friends groups, and securing private partnerships.

- Create a priority or special section in the OPSP so that LWCF funds can be awarded to those cities and counties identified as having the most severe needs.
- Develop and circulate a guide to facility types ranked by cost-effectiveness.
  - Classify each type of facility according to its capital cost, annual maintenance cost and the level of participation in activities it can provide.
  - Incorporate the "Formula for New Park Maintenance" developed by TDEC to show the likely annual maintenance costs for each type of facility.
  - Incorporate NSRE data on recreation activity participation by Tennesseans as one measure of the level of participation in activities each facility type can provide.
  - Use this guide in providing technical assistance to local governments in determining what are the most cost-effective facility types they can build.
- Use the recreation grants scoring system (OPSP) to encourage State Parks and local governments to make the most of what they already have by assigning priorities to projects that:
  - Meet the criteria of ECD's new Governor's Recognition of Economic Achievement in Tennessee (GREAT) program,
  - Leverage and link with existing recreation resources in the Tennessee Recreation System: Federal, State, and local parks and greenways,
  - Use public/private partnerships and intergovernmental multi-use agreements (*see Proposal 2: Multi-use Agreements.*)
  - Renovate or rehabilitate current facilities and park areas (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*)



## ***Generate Stronger Support for Conservation and Recreation***

### **PROPOSAL 13:**

### **Establish a statewide environmental education program.**

Environmental education ranked as the highest priority among all environmental issues relating to recreation, both among the participants at this plan's public workshops and among members of the TRAC committee.

#### **Current status of environmental education**

In passing the 1990 National Environmental Education Act, the Congress concluded that "national as well as international environmental problems are increasing and represent a threat to the quality of life and economic vitality, and that effective solutions require education of the public."

Likewise, the National Environmental Education Advisory Council has described the importance of environmental education this way:

"Environmental education is critical...to the daily lives of all Americans...because complex environmental challenges require a well-trained environmental workforce and an educated public who have the knowledge and skills to fully and actively participate in solving these problems. Environmental education is relevant because it can help to ensure the health and welfare of the nation by protecting human health, advancing quality education, expanding employment opportunities, promoting sustainable development, and protecting our natural heritage," ("Report Assessing Environmental Education in The United States and The Implementation of The National Environmental Education Act of 1990," National Environmental Education Advisory Council, U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, Environmental Education Division, Washington, DC, December 1996.)

Though environmental education has often been characterized as a critical need of society, only 12 states in the nation currently include environmental education material as a required component of their schools' curriculum. These include the southeastern states of Arkansas, Georgia, and Louisiana. The National Environmental Education Advisory Council has concluded that, "despite the wealth of programs and materials, widespread support and funding for environmental education is often lacking. Environmental education is not a clear priority at any level within our education system or society, and many programs face on-going resource, funding, and staff limitations. In addition, many view environmental



**Cedars of Lebanon State Park.**

education as an 'add-on' and not part of mainstream education. For these reasons, there needs to be clear and consistent political and legislative support at all levels."

Tennessee's performance in providing environmental education has declined since the publication of the last *Tennessee State Recreation Plan* in 1995. The Department of Education's State Environmental Office, established in 1982 to provide curriculum and teacher training to school districts all across the state, was eliminated in 1995, effectively ending the department's support for environmental education in schools. Likewise, the State Parks Program Services section, which supported ranger naturalist programs in the parks, was dismantled under the previous administration. At the start of 2003, what environmental education was still taking place in schools and parks in Tennessee was fragmented and intermittent, depending generally on the personal initiative of individual teachers and park managers, and lacking any formal coordination or support from the State.

### **Tennessee's environmental education infrastructure**

There still exists an excellent infrastructure that, with the proper commitment from the State, could quickly produce a first-rate environmental education program in Tennessee.

- The Tennessee Environmental Education Association serves as an information clearinghouse and support center for some 200-300 professionals in the field from all across the state.
- The Department of Education has established the Tennessee Science Standards K-12, which contain some elements of environmental education, but these topics are not necessarily taught because there is no formal mandate to do so.
- The Department of Education's Project CENTS (Conservation Education Now for Tennessee Students) was a nationally recognized teacher training program which trained 23,000 teachers



**Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park.**

between 1981 and 1992 and provided them with educational materials to teach hundreds of thousands of students. This program was administered in partnership with the Tennessee Conservation League, the Tennessee Forestry Association, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. All the elements of Project CENTS still exist today, and reinstating the program could serve to establish a statewide environmental education program at a relatively low cost.

- Likewise, excellent K-12 curriculum materials are readily available in the form of the nationally recognized “Project” curriculum, which allows environmental education to be incorporated into existing academic disciplines rather than teaching it as a separate course. Dissemination of the Project curricula in Tennessee is now decentralized:
  - Austin Peay State University coordinates Project Wet, with water quality as its theme.
  - The Tennessee Conservation League, with funding through TWRA, coordinates Project Wild and Project Wild Aquatic, with wildlife and aquatic life as their themes.
  - The Tennessee Forestry Association, with funding through the TDA Division of Forestry, coordinates project Learning Tree, with forests as its theme.
- The Federal Clean Air Act, which is administered in Tennessee by TDEC, requires certain environmental education functions.
- Many State Parks still have staff members with training and experience as ranger-naturalists. The parks themselves have excellent natural resources for providing quality interpretive programming for school groups and general visitors. This year TDEC reestablished its Program Services Section, giving it a mandate to restore and support the interpretive programming provided by the State Parks.

- Numerous nature centers in Tennessee provide environmental education as their core mission. These organizations include three major zoos and the Tennessee Aquarium, which annually receives over one million visitors, including numerous school groups.

### Successful models

Twenty-two states have set up some form of State Environmental Education Board or Advisory Council. These include the following southeastern states:

Arkansas  
Florida  
Georgia  
Kentucky  
North Carolina  
South Carolina.

These states’ environmental education councils serve as the policy making and implementation oversight bodies for many state environmental education programs. Membership often includes key representatives of constituencies supporting environmental education, including school teachers and administrators, university and business representatives, legislators, state agency representatives, and leaders from nonprofit conservation organizations. These entities often oversee implementation of an environmental education master plan’s recommendations, perform assessments of the status of environmental education statewide, continue to identify needs and set priorities, consult with the Department of Education and other state agencies and offices about program priorities, complete regular reports to the legislature, oversee an environmental education grants program, and solicit funds, (source: NEEAP National Environmental Education Advancement Project.)

By following these successful models, the State of Tennessee now has an opportunity to capitalize on its well-developed environmental education infrastructure, to reverse the decline of past years, and to



**Reelfoot Lake State Natural Area.**

reestablish environmental education in the state. This process will require centralized coordination and formal recognition of the need for environmental education in schools.

**Implementation strategies**

**13.1:** The Governor should establish a Tennessee Environmental Education Advisory Council and charge this body with preparing and implementing a coordinated statewide Environmental Education Master Plan. This council should include representatives of the Department of Education, TDEC-State Parks, TWRA, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Environmental Education Association, the Tennessee Forestry Association, Austin Peay State University Environmental Education Center, MTSU Center for Environmental Education, the Tennessee Conservation League,

and career educators in the field. A key provision of the Environmental Education Master Plan should be the reinstatement of Project CENTS or a similar program within the Tennessee Department of Education.

**13.2:** TDEC - State Parks should maintain the high priority it has now placed on interpretive programming by providing staff training in natural resource interpretation. This training should include material concerning the special interpretive needs of ethnic and minority populations and of children and families who may have had little or no exposure to the natural outdoor environment.

**13.3:** PARTAS, in its technical assistance to local communities, should encourage environmental education by helping to coordinate community efforts, including school/parks cooperative agreements.

**13.4:** TDEC-RES should assign a priority in grant scoring to applicants who have developed plans to use their park facilities to support environmental education programming.

**13.5:** The Governor should seek to provide adequate funding for the *Tennessee Conservationist* magazine.

**13.6:** The TRAC committee should in future include one or more members of the environmental education profession to assist in that body's follow-up role in implementing this Action Program (*see Proposal 17: Follow-up.*)

**13.7:** TDTD should include links to all of Tennessee's nature centers on the proposed recreation one-stop website (*see Proposal 3: Recreation One-stop website.*)



**PROPOSAL 14:**  
**Increase advocacy and funding for parks and conservation in Tennessee.**

This plan's public workshops and local agency needs survey and the TRAC committee have all ranked increased funding as a top priority recreation need in Tennessee. The TRAC has concluded that this need cannot be met without more effective advocacy for recreation and better documentation of the overall value of recreation to Tennessee.

What is the total economic value of the benefits that parks and recreation provide to Tennessee? Do the public funds invested in parks and recreation result in a net gain to the state? Would greater investment in this area be justified in terms of the resulting benefits?

These are questions that have not been addressed in any comprehensive way in Tennessee. Other states, most notably Ohio, Arizona, and Florida, have undertaken to find answers. A 2000 study in Ohio concluded that visits to their State Parks injected more than \$2 billion into the state's economy each year, (Ohio DNR news release, December 13, 2000.)

Parks and recreation are universally recognized as important civic amenities which benefit the public in many intangible ways, such as relief from the stresses of daily life, better health through exercise, and a sense of connection with the natural world. However, these benefits are often viewed as secondary in comparison to traditional bread-and-butter issues like economic development, health care, education, security, and transportation, to name a few. Too often, even in times of economic prosperity, the budget needs of parks and recreation take a back seat to these other programs.

**The pattern of spending for recreation in the southeast**

During the 1990s a nationwide pattern of cuts to state park budgets emerged, as documented in a study by the State Park Information Resources Center. According to this report, the pattern of budget cuts for state parks has been most acute in the southeast region. The southeast has the highest number of people per acre of state park in the nation (*see Table 10.*)

**Table 10. Population pressure on recreation areas by region, 1996-1999**

Region	Total Areas	People per Area (thousands)	Total Acres (millions)	People per Acre
Southeast	643	91.9	1.6	38.0
Central	663	64.8	1.2	36.7
North Central	825	66.6	1.7	32.9
Southwest	703	69.5	2.1	22.8
Northeast	1686	31.6	2.4	22.0
Northwest	1160	11.8	4.0	3.4

("State Park Research Report 00-2, Strategic Influence Scanning: A Decade Of Trends In The State Parks," State Park Information Resources Center, Department of Recreation & Park Administration, Indiana University.)

In addition, state parks in the southeast have seen significant growth in the numbers of visitors (*see Table 11.*)

Yet despite high population pressures the southeastern region's state parks and the steady growth of park visitation, the southeastern states have made the deepest cuts in their state park operating budgets (*see Table 12.*)

These same southeastern state parks have generated the second highest levels of revenue returns to the state, as measured in proportion to their operating budgets (*see Table 13.*)

In many of these states, including Tennessee, park revenues revert to the General Fund rather than contributing directly to park operations.

Collectively these data paint a picture of a prevailing mindset among southeastern state

governments that gives a low priority to funding their state parks, fails to recognize the genuine budgetary needs of the parks, and underestimates the overall value of these assets to the state's economy.

The situation is most extreme in Tennessee, because the state has the highest state park visitation levels in the southeast (Source: Congressional Quarterly's State Fact Finder, Rankings Across America 2001) and the second highest total state park acreage in the southeast, after Florida. In addition, State Parks are the state's number one tourist attraction. Yet the legislature continues to place a relatively low priority on State Park funding, as evidenced by declining maintenance budgets (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*)

U.S. Census data on recreation spending by both state and local governments also reflects a

**Table 11. Total park visitation and change, 1990-1999**

Region	Visitation (millions)	Visitation Change 1990-1999 (millions)	% Change 1990-1999
North Central	171.0	-7.8	22.9
Northeast	140.5	5.0	18.7
Southwest	129.5	12.8	17.3
Southeast	108.4	5.2	14.5
Northwest	107.2	-0.3	14.3
Central	93.2	-1.7	12.4

**Table 12. Per-visitor state parks operating expenditures change: 1995 and 1999**

Region	1995 Change	1999 Change
Southeast	-0.31	-0.48
North Central	0.02	-0.24
Central	0.18	-0.19
Southwest	-0.16	-0.15
Northwest	0	-0.01
Northeast	-0.31	0.25

**Table 13. State park revenues as a share of operating budget, 1999**

Region	Revenue as % of operating budget
North Central	51.6
Southeast	50.3
Central	46.6
Northeast	38.8
Northwest	38.4
Southwest	4.3

pattern of relatively low funding of recreation in Tennessee. The 2000 data shows Tennessee third among southeastern states in state and local recreation funding per capita, after North Carolina and Virginia. Data from 1996 shows high per capita spending during that year, which was caused by special Bicentennial projects and on the new greenways and trails initiative, but that year's spending was a one-time departure from the overall pattern.

Though no study exists to document the corresponding situation with local parks, this plan's survey of local park and recreation professionals and conversations with the PARTAS staff suggest a similar widespread pattern of underfunding and weak support for local parks and recreation programs.

### Findings of the planning process

If parks and recreation are being relegated to secondary status in the southeast in general and Tennessee in particular, what is the cause? One answer proposed by the TRAC committee was a lack of strong advocacy for recreation. There is a general conviction that the message has not reached decision-makers in the State and local governments that parks are a sound public investment with a high return of benefits. To correct this problem, those who would advocate for parks and recreation will need hard data on the total value of the economic benefits of parks and recreation in Tennessee.

In addition, it was widely noted that the budgets of both State and local providers of parks and



Standing Stone State Park.

### Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area



recreation have been subject to erosion because of a lack of dedicated sources of funding for parks operations. Dedicated funding would remove the temptation to shortchange parks and recreation budgets to pay for other priorities, and could help ensure that Tennessee's parks will have an adequate level of operational support commensurate with their actual needs and their overall contribution to the state.

Finally, the PARTAS staff, in conversations with local governments, has seen indications that Tennessee currently has a shortage of qualified and trained recreation professionals. As a result, many local governments hire untrained personnel to manage their recreation delivery systems. Trained professionals are needed to provide quality recreation management and services, and to serve as advocates for adequate recreation funding at the local level.

### Implementation strategies

**14.1: The Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association**, in association with the **MTSU Recreation & Leisure Services Department** and other partners, should undertake a comprehensive assessment of the total economic value of the benefits, both direct and indirect, that parks and recreation provide to Tennessee. Areas for this assessment to consider may include:

- Recreation- and tourism-related economic development impacts, including park visitation, hunting and fishing, water-based activities, heritage-oriented

activities, and recreation-related special events,

- Employee productivity impacts,
- Real estate value impacts,
- Corporate recruitment impacts,
- Public health impacts,
- Impacts on rates of crime and incarceration,
- Impacts on rates of self-destructive activities among young people.

**14.2: TDEC and TRPA** should actively disseminate the findings of this benefits assessment to legislators, local government officials, and the general public.

**14.3: The Governor's office** should undertake research into successful measures to provide dedicated funding for parks in other states, and should consider the establishment of dedicated funding sources for parks in Tennessee. Such funding may be considered in conjunction with efforts to provide funding for the backlog of renovation and maintenance in the State Parks (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*) Possible options may include:

- Full funding for the Local Parks and Recreation Fund,
- A tax on recreation-related equipment,
- Dedication of one penny of the state gasoline tax for parks and recreation,
- A state bond issue for State Parks renovation,
- A State Parks Foundation established to raise an endowment for State Parks from corporate, foundation, and private donors.

**14.4: TDEC, PARTAS, and MTSU** should develop an institute to provide continuing education training for parks and recreation professionals.



***PROPOSAL 15:***  
**Define and maintain continuity of  
Parks and Conservation policies.**

The Tennessee State Parks Organic Act defines the mission of the State Parks as follows:

“To preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural and cultural and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of State Parks.”

This is a complex mission, and the act clearly intends these responsibilities to be given the perspective and expertise of professionals in parks, recreation and resource conservation.

Unfortunately, this mission statement has been subject to reinterpretation by successive administrations. During the 1990's, a priority was placed on producing revenue from the State Parks, which led to a management emphasis on recreation oriented toward intense development in resort parks rather than toward natural resources. Park user fees were instituted for the first time, and some parks that did not fit the revenue producing profile were transferred to other ownership or closed altogether. At the same time, the parks' recreation and interpretive programs were dismantled.

Tennessee has the eighth most visited state park system in the nation. The parks contribute substantially to the state's economy and quality of life. Proper management of these valuable assets requires a clear definition of parks and conservation policies and long-term continuity in their implementation.

An additional function which requires clear definition and continuity of policy is TDEC-RES's recreation grants programs. The department's policy in administering these grants is to follow an objective grant scoring process (OPSP). This process is designed to award grants based entirely on each project's merits and conformity to the department's

long-term policies. Consistent adherence to this policy is critical, as deviation from the OPSP standards can result in grant funds going to projects which do not meet professional criteria for funding.

A key factor that may be contributing to a lack



**Laurel-Snow Pocket Wilderness State Natural Area.**

of definition and continuity in parks and conservation policy is the current composition of TDEC. The department, one of the largest in Tennessee state government, combines the functions of environmental regulation with those of parks and conservation. These two missions are relatively unrelated, and they involve very different types of professional expertise. In addition, these functions project very different kinds of public images. A standalone department dedicated to parks and conservation would have a more well-defined identity and should be better able to promote stronger advocacy for its core mission and maintain continuity of its policies.

Under the current administration, the State Parks have received new leadership from a career professional in parks and recreation with a mandate to return the parks to their core mission of providing high quality recreation based on natural, cultural, and scenic resources.

The challenge for the current administration is to perpetuate the professional perspective in parks leadership and provide future continuity in maintaining the core mission of the park system and the integrity of the recreation grants program. Some states, including five of the eight states with the most visited parks, have established State Parks Commissions to provide independent continuity for their parks departments; and this approach could be one solution to consider, among others.

### Implementation strategies

**15.1:** The leadership of TDEC, in consultation with the **Governor**, should consider dividing the department's two basic functions - environmental regulation and parks and conservation - into two separate departments. If this division is implemented, consideration should be given to establishing an advisory or policy board to help define and maintain continuity of parks and conservation policies.

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### **PROPOSAL 16:**

### **Make greater use of volunteers and Friends groups to support local, State and Federal parks.**

The willingness of the American public to volunteer their time is simply extraordinary. According to a study by the non-profit organization Independent Sector, 44 percent of adults, or 83.9 million people, served as volunteers to some formal organization in 2000. Their donated time represented the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$239 billion.

For state and local parks, this volunteer spirit represents a great potential source of support, and one which can be tapped at very little expense. There are two ways to involve the public in assisting parks: volunteer programs and Friends groups.

### **Volunteers in parks**

The National Park Service Volunteers-In-Parks Program (VIP), established in 1970, provides a vehicle through which the Park Service receives voluntary services from the public. This program has become a major asset for NPS. Since 1990, the number of volunteers has increased an average of 5% per year. There are now 340 separate volunteer programs throughout the National Park Service. In Fiscal Year 2002, these programs resulted in 125,000 National Park volunteers donating 4.5 million hours valued at over \$72 million.

The overall value of volunteer services to Tennessee State Parks has not been measured. Volunteers are helping the parks in many ways, but the State Parks volunteer program has room to grow. The question is: How can the Parks gain greater access to the public's willingness to volunteer? The 2000 study by Independent Sector suggests a simple

**Local park.**

answer: just ask. The study found that 71% of people who were asked to volunteer agreed to do so, while only 29% of people who were not asked made a volunteer commitment. The challenge for the State Parks is to develop effective ways to ask, and to put people in touch with opportunities to volunteer.

**Friends groups**

A Friends group is generally a non-profit organization set up to support an individual park. Such groups are able to engage in activities to improve the park which the park staff, burdened with the demands of basic operations, cannot undertake. These contributions include fundraising, developing educational materials, providing interpretive exhibits, performing natural resource inventories, acquiring land, and advocacy.

The National Parks Friends Initiative, launched in 1994 has recognized the great value of Friends groups and is a good model for the states to follow. The program develops an effective network of support through communication; mentoring and technical assistance; and training for the 150 National Park Friends groups throughout the United

States. Collectively, the groups raise more than \$16 million a year and donate thousands of hours of volunteer time in the Parks.

Tennessee now has 20 Friends groups supporting individual State Parks, and the contributions of these groups is significant. Every state and local park could benefit from the support of this kind of organization.

**Implementation strategies**

**16.1:** TDEC-State Parks should support their new **Friends Coordinator** in providing administrative assistance to friends groups statewide and in implementing the following goals:

- Establish a Friends group for every State Park.
- Develop a friends website containing helpful information for Friends groups.
- Conduct training workshops on such topics as resolution of conflicts with park managers, grant writing, forming corporate partnerships, and community fundraising.
- Publish a quarterly Friends of State Parks newsletter to disseminate information useful to these groups.

**16.2:** TDEC-State Parks should strengthen their volunteer outreach efforts, connecting people with opportunities to offer volunteer services to the parks, by the following means:

- Develop a parks volunteer website.
- Establish statewide database of volunteers to better match their time, talents and energy to specific projects and programs.
- Communicate the importance of and need for volunteers through press releases, newspaper advertisements, e-mails, the volunteer website, and articles.
- Coordinate and partner with organizations such as Friends groups, constituency groups, environmental groups, foundations, businesses, schools, and youth groups.
- Recruit and train volunteers and recognize volunteers for their contributions.

**16.3:** TDEC should ensure that information on volunteering opportunities is available on each State Park web page, as well as contact information for a Friends group, if one exists for the park.

**16.4:** TDEC-RES and PARTAS should strengthen their technical assistance tools to support the establishment of Friends groups and volunteer programs for local parks. These tools may include publications about volunteer outreach, model volunteer programs, model Friends groups, etc. These tools should be made available to local governments and other agencies on the TDEC-RES website. PARTAS should also conduct training and information sessions through TRPA schools and workshops and through TDEC when necessary.

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### ***PROPOSAL 17:***

#### ***Follow-up on the Action Program of this Tennessee State Recreation Plan.***

The Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) appointed by Governor Bredesen to lead this planning process includes senior representatives of:

- Eight State departments and the Governor's office,
- Four Federal agencies,
- Nine local governments, and
- Six organizations relating to recreation and conservation.

This body met three times in 2003 to consider items for inclusion in the plan and to define implementation steps and priorities for this Action Program. Thanks to the breadth of expertise in this group and the wealth of information they could bring to the table, the TRAC was able to identify needs and find solutions very quickly. It became apparent that this group had the ability accomplish a great deal for Tennessee.

Recognizing the value of this kind of forum, the TRAC has decided to continue as an ongoing entity and schedule regular meetings to follow up on the implementation of this Action Program. This process will be especially valuable in facilitating several of the Action Program proposals that call for interagency cooperative partnerships.

### **Implementation strategies**

**17.1:** The TRAC committee should meet at least once annually in the years 2004-2008 to monitor the progress in implementing this Action Program by all parties, identify barriers that need to



be overcome, develop any new recommendations that may be warranted, issue an annual assessment report, and encourage continued coordination and cooperation among the involved agencies.

**17.2:** TDEC should continue to provide liaison and organizational support for the TRAC.

**17.3:** The Governor should continue to include diverse representation in the TRAC membership, including the addition of representatives of the environmental education profession (*see Proposal 13: Environmental Education*), development districts, local governing bodies, private providers, and related non-profit groups (*see Proposal 1: Seamless Recreation System.*)

**Red Clay Council Ground State Historic Park.**



**Great Smoky Mountains National Park.**

## ***Provide Programming to Address Critical Needs***

### **PROPOSAL 18:**

#### **Provide organized health and fitness opportunities for target groups.**

Those aspects of recreation that involve physical activity – walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, and playing sports – can have a significant impact on public health and fitness. Thus, a critical question which this *State Recreation Plan* must consider is: Do Tennesseans get as much exercise as they need? One way to approach that question is to look at available data for health factors that are affected by levels of activity.

- 46% of Tennesseans are overweight, including 23.3% of the state's children. Youth who are overweight have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults, (USDA, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.)
- The incidence of obesity rose in Tennessee from 11.8% in 1990 to 23.4% in 2001, an increase of



**Local soccer field.**

98% in 11 years, (Division of Adult and Community Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Online Prevalence Data, 1995-2001.)

- A report by the Surgeon General lists the treatment and prevention of obesity as a top national priority, ("A Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity," Surgeon General of the United States, 2001.)
- According to a recent *New York Times* article, "some researchers predict that today's children will be the first generation of Americans whose life expectancy will actually be shorter than that of their parents," ("The Agricultural Contradictions of Obesity," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 21, 2003.)
- 7.7% of the adults in Tennessee have diabetes as compared to 6.1% of the national adult population nationally. Diabetes was responsible for over one-third of deaths in Tennessee, in 2001, ("State Nutrition and Physical Activity Program to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases," grant application by the Tenn Department of Health, 2002.)
- Tennessee has the fifth highest rate of death from heart disease (19% higher than the national rate) and stroke (23% higher than the national rate,) (National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC.)

These data suggest that many Tennesseans need more exercise. In fact, CDC data show that 38% of Tennesseans report no physical activity during their leisure time. This is the fourth highest rate in the nation, and 35% higher than the national rate of inactivity, (Division of Adult and Community Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Online Prevalence Data, 1995-2001.)

This general lack of physical activity may have the highest impact among three key population groups: young people, seniors, and minorities.

### Young people

Childhood and adolescence may be critical periods for preventing sedentary behavior among adults by maintaining the habit of physical activity throughout the school years. Yet the nation has seen a decline in physical exercise associated with schools:

- Fewer than 30% of high school students attend a daily physical education class, a decline of nearly 50% in less than a decade, (Youth Behavior Surveillance System, Table 42, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Only one state requires daily participation in a physical education class from kindergarten through 12th grade. From 9th to 12th grade, the percentage of students enrolled in a physical education class declined from 79% to 37%, (Youth Behavior Surveillance System, Table 42, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)
- Fewer than 30% of students walk to school, and only 3% ride their bicycle, (National Personal Transportation Survey, Federal Highway Administration, 1995.)

The benefits of exercise for students go beyond basic health and fitness. A 2002 study by the California Department of Education found a direct relationship between academic achievement and physical fitness in California's public school students.

### Seniors

By age 75, about one in three men and one in two women engage in no physical activity. The loss of strength and stamina attributed to aging is in part caused by reduced physical activity. Inactivity increases with age.

Older adults can obtain significant health benefits with a moderate amount of physical activity, preferably daily. Regular exercise can:

- Help maintain the ability to live independently and reduce the risk of falling and fracturing bones,
- Reduce the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes,
- Help reduce blood pressure in some people with hypertension,
- Help people with chronic, disabling conditions improve their stamina and muscle strength.

(source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity.)

### Minorities

Minority populations have been found to have higher rates of physical inactivity than the general population (*see Table 14.*)

These discrepancies in levels of activity are having a dramatic effect on the health of these population groups. A report issued by the Dana Farber Cancer Institute indicates that "barriers to healthy lifestyles, early detection services and good medical care are contributing to higher cancer incidence and mortality rates for African-Americans and other medically underserved minorities in this country when compared with white U.S. citizens."

**Table 14. Inactivity levels by population group**

Population group	No free-time physical activity
Non-Hispanic whites	36%
Non-Hispanic blacks	52%
Hispanics	54%
(National Health Interview Survey, CDC, 1991-1997)	

The report identifies lack of physical activity and obesity as contributing factors, (press release, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, March 25, 2003.)

Addressing possible barriers to activity for these groups, a study by the CDC found that, when people perceive their neighborhoods to be unsafe, they also tend to have higher levels of physical inactivity, (Neighborhood Safety and the Prevalence of Physical Inactivity — Selected States, CDC, 1996.)

## Rural Communities

In the 23 Tennessee counties and scores of rural communities that have no organized recreation delivery system, it is especially difficult to address the local populations' fitness needs. In addition to a lack of adequate recreation facilities, these areas also do not have professionally trained staff who can organize outreach programs for underserved population groups.

The problem of inactivity also appears to be more acute in these areas. A study by the CDC found physical inactivity to be more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. This pattern was more pronounced in the southeast than in other parts of the U.S. The fact that residents of rural areas in this study were older, less educated, and poorer than residents of urban areas only partly explains the difference. After adjusting for these factors, the difference in physical inactivity levels remained, (cited in University Of South Carolina Prevention Research Center Notes.)

## Addressing the issues

The Governor's Council on Fitness and Health has established the Tennessee Healthy Weight Network for Children and Youth to address obesity among young people. It attempts to provide a more supportive environment for active recreation and fitness programs.

In 2003, Middle Tennessee State University, through a contract with the Department of Health, is completing an inventory on physical activity opportunities in communities all across the state. This "Active Communities" assessment will help local communities determine whether their policies and

### Local BMX park.



zoning, recreation facilities and programs, schools, and public transportation are making it easier or more difficult for people to be physically active.

## Implementation strategies

**18.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should work in partnership with the **Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health** to help local communities conduct Active Communities assessment surveys.

**18.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should help local governments develop outreach programs targeted at population groups most affected by high levels of inactivity: youth, seniors, minorities, and rural residents. This outreach effort should include developing local, State and Federal partnerships to provide more recreation programs for these population groups, including assistance from the **Tennessee Department of Education**, the **Commission on Aging**, and other agencies with access to the target groups.



**PROPOSAL 19:****Support the ability of local governments to deliver quality recreation programming.**

In Tennessee, the primary responsibility for providing local recreation opportunities rests with local governments, and making recreation available to residents is generally recognized as a legitimate and essential function of local government services. Ideally this function is provided through a professional “parks and recreation delivery system.”

Tennessee has 87 full-time departments that have a professional director and/or staff. There are also approximately 42 communities that have established a park director, park maintenance supervisor, or other designated position to oversee recreation services. However, over 35% of Tennessee’s population is currently not served by an organized parks and recreation delivery system.

While some communities are simply unaware of the importance of providing recreation opportunities in their area, a TDEC-RES questionnaire sent to all cities and counties that lack parks and recreation services in their communities found that 38.8% were interested in providing full-time recreation services. An overwhelming majority felt that recreation and parks are important services that should be provided by local governments.

**TDEC Recreation Delivery System Support Programs**

Recognizing that local governments may not be able to provide a full range of recreation services independently, TDEC has and has adopted three primary strategies to assist them:

1. TDEC encourages local governments to work jointly with other government agencies, schools, or other recreation providers, through contracts, networking, etc. By doing so, a community which lacks parks or facilities can still provide quality recreation programming for local residents by using the facilities of other agencies (*see Proposal 2: Multi-use Agreements*.)

2. TDEC-RES administers the Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program (TRIP,) which targets and provides grant money to cities and counties that have no comprehensive parks and recreation delivery system in operation due to lack of staffing and organization. The TRIP program provides grants for hiring a professional parks and recreation director, establishing a recreation office, and hiring two part-time summer leaders.

3. TDEC-RES houses the Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service (PARTAS), which provides technical assistance to local governments to help them establish full-time recreation delivery systems. PARTAS has three regional offices across the state and works on an ongoing basis with the TRIP program recipients. The assistance they provide includes:

- Serving as interagency coordinator for all public recreation providers,
- Conducting recreation assessments for local governments to outline their current assets and set goals to ensure diverse recreation opportunities for the citizens in each community,
- Conducting surveys relating to operations and procedures, salaries, etc. of local park and recreation directors and types of recreation opportunities in each community,

**Standing Stone State Park.**

- Conducting workshops relating to maintenance and recreation board training,
- Creating user fee policies, written agreements, and maintenance plans for local governments.

In addition, PARTAS works to promote a deeper appreciation among local governments of the central concepts of public recreation and parks:

- The importance of parks and open spaces in creating a livable urban environment,
- The need for positive recreation experiences for all citizens, particularly children and youth,
- The essential role of recreation in improving individual health and well-being,
- The central role that building strong local citizen support has had in developing successful recreation and park programs.

### **Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Programs**

In addition to contributing to quality of life in general, well-organized recreation delivery systems can also help to counter many of the behavioral problems of adolescence: substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and school dropout. Yet this is a role which recreation departments have not traditionally undertaken. Now a national movement which is taking root in Tennessee seeks to involve recreation providers in a coordinated prevention program.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) is a national organization that builds and supports community coalitions to promote safe, healthy and drug-free communities. These community coalitions function by connecting multiple sectors of the community, including businesses, parents, media, law enforcement, schools, faith organizations, recreation providers, health providers, social service agencies, and the government. These partners organize and develop plans and programs to coordinate a comprehensive, community-wide approach to substance abuse and its related problems.

This organization currently supports more than 5,000 community coalitions all across the country. Its Tennessee affiliate, CADCAT, is a statewide network which currently totals 32 community coalitions. CADCAT support includes technical assistance and training in implementing the highly effective Communities That Care prevention model.

Nashville's Metro Parks Department has played an active role in supporting the local coalition, providing facilities and prevention-oriented programming. As a result of this coalition's efforts, some neighborhoods in Nashville have seen dramatic declines in the rates of juvenile arrest and school drop-outs in just two years. This partnership represents an outstandingly successful model for the kinds of roles that all parks and recreation providers in Tennessee can play in assisting CADCAT prevention efforts.

## Implementation strategies

**19.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should continue to provide support for local recreation program planning efforts by the following means:

- Developing a Technical Assistance newsletter distributed through a website.
- Continuing to develop technical bulletins on topics relating to various program delivery elements.
- Promoting Benefits-Based-Programming of parks and recreation services.
- Improving communication through surveys, e-mails, a web site, etc.
- Making local governments more aware of the PARTAS services available to them.

**19.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should facilitate the role of recreation providers in youth drug use prevention by the following means:

- Representing Tennessee's recreation providers on the board of the **Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of Tennessee (CADCAT)**.
- Facilitating the formation of partnerships between local recreation providers and community anti-drug coalitions.
- Assisting CADCAT in providing prevention training to local recreation providers.
- Facilitating prevention training for State Parks personnel.

**Warrior's Path State Park.**





**Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park, State Natural Area, and Wildlife Management Area.**



# Implementation Summary

The following section provides a recap of all implementation steps in this plan's Action Program. This section can serve as a quick reference summary for agencies and organizations tasked with implementing these recommendations. It will also be the checklist for the TRAC committee when it meets annually during 2004-2008 to monitor progress in implementing these recommendations.

## **PROPOSAL 1:**

### **Organize existing Federal, State and local resources into a seamless "Tennessee Recreation System."**

**1.1:** The Governor should direct the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) to serve as the formal interagency mechanism to formulate and implement strategic policies to establish a seamless Tennessee Recreation System. Goals set forth for the Tennessee Recreation System should include:

- To provide for efficient coordination of planning efforts among all state, federal, and local recreation-related agencies, including the sharing of information, plans, and professional expertise. Areas to coordinate may include acquisitions, conservation policies, park planning, resource management, trails and blueways, programming, funding requests and geographic information. Implementation may include a web-based searchable library of downloadable plans and information that can be shared by all recreation-related agencies.
- To coordinate geographic information about all recreation properties and opportunities in the state through a centralized database of public lands data at TWRA and a database of private recreation providers at TDTD.
- To minimize wasteful duplication of programs and facilities, allowing state, federal, and local agencies to accomplish more with the funding and manpower assets they have currently.
- To establish consistent standards, policies and management procedures for all recreation sites at all levels, so that the public can depend on a reliable standard of quality at any site they visit (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*) This should include technical assistance from state and federal agencies to local governments to improve resource management at the local level.
- To continue to promote the creation of a statewide network of greenways and trails, as proposed by the Governor's Council on Greenways and Trails in the *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* (*see Proposal 9: Greenways and Trails.*)
- To consolidate public information about the full range of recreation opportunities the state has to offer, making such information more readily accessible for Tennesseans and out-of-state visitors through distribution of printed literature and a one-stop Tennessee Recreation System website (*see Proposal 3: One-Stop Website, and Proposal 4: Printed Information.*)
- To support TDEC-RES and PARTAS in providing recreation opportunities to Tennessee residents who are currently underserved (such as inner city youth,

rural residents, disabled residents, low income residents, and non-English speaking residents) by encouraging the sharing of facilities and programming across jurisdictional lines (*see Proposal 2: Multi-use Agreements, Proposal 18: Health and Fitness, and Proposal 19: Ability of Local Governments.*)

- To support **ECD** in promoting regional recreational development enterprises, in which assets are networked to form recreational destinations that can be branded and marketed cooperatively for sustainable tourism and economic development (*see Proposal 5: Recreational Development Corridors.*)
- To ensure that the Tennessee Recreation System includes ongoing partnerships with **development districts, local governing bodies, private providers, and related non-profit groups**. The TRAC committee should serve as a conduit for participation by these stakeholders (*see Proposal 17: Recreation Plan Follow-up.*)

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### **PROPOSAL 2:**

#### **Facilitate formal multi-use agreements among all levels of government.**

**2.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS and State Parks should encourage various forms of multi-use agreements between all levels of government.

**2.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should provide publications and training for local governments on how to negotiate such intergovernmental agreements. PARTAS should also update the *School-Park Agreement Information* booklet.

**2.3:** TDEC-RES should urge the **Tennessee Municipal League** and other related agencies, such as **Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association, Tennessee School Boards Association, the County Services Association, and local planning commissions**, to pass resolutions to support multi-use agreements, to inform local governments about this resolution and to encourage local governments to enter into such agreements.



Tennessee Scenic Byway, TDOT.

**PROPOSAL 3:****Develop a comprehensive one-stop website for recreation information.**

**3.1:** TDEC and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) should work cooperatively to develop a recreation one-stop website for the Tennessee Recreation System. The first phase of this process should be to include all recreation sites managed by State and Federal agencies on the existing Tennessee Vacation website and to provide links to the web pages of each of these sites. TWRA, TDOT, TDA, COE, TVA, NPS, USFS, and USFWS should cooperate by providing the necessary information to TDEC. TDEC and TDTD should establish a strong, cooperative relationship to implement this proposal.

**3.2:** The ultimate goal of this initiative should be to create a comprehensive Tennessee Recreation System site with the following features:

- Interactive maps of the state showing the major state and federal sites and major attractions in each region.
- A searchable database of all recreation-related sites managed by government agencies (Federal, State, and local) as well as privately managed sites.
- A direct link to the external web page of each site in the database, if such a page exists.
- Search options for the full range of recreation activities and information for a wide range of users.
- Options for searching for all resources, events, and attractions in any one of the state's Recreational Development Corridors (*see Proposal 5: Recreational Development Corridors.*)
- Information on how the public can get involved in supporting public recreation resources, through

**Fall Creek Falls State Resort Park.**

Friends groups or by volunteering (federal, state, and local.)

- Information about cultural and recreational events of all types.
- Information and downloadable maps specific to particular nature-based and culture-based activities, such as birding and other wildlife observation, driving scenic or historic byways, fishing, etc.

**3.3:** TDEC should ensure that all recreation resource information collected for this website is organized to meet U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) protocols for the Recreation.gov website and should have the data exported to DOI for inclusion in that site.

**PROPOSAL 4:****Provide more printed information about State and Federal recreation resources.**

**4.1:** TDEC should make printed literature about recreation sites more readily available to the public by the following means:

- In FY 2004, seek budget funding to reprint existing literature about State Parks and distribute this information through TDOT's Interstate Welcome Centers and other visitor information outlets, especially at the individual park sites.
- Seek funding to develop and print a new, comprehensive brochure about State Parks that will better suit the needs of the department and the recreation public.
- Plan to develop a permanent or interactive information kiosk/computer system at each TDOT Welcome Center.
- Publish and distribute a Tennessee State Recreation System Map showing all the major public recreation sites in the state, including Federal and State Parks, Scenic Rivers, long-distance hiking trails, Wildlife Management Areas, reservoir recreation areas, and major local parks. TDEC-RES should undertake this project in partnership with TWRA.
- Develop and distribute small publications on specialized themes targeted specifically to those engaged in high-participation nature-based and culture-based activities (for a list of high participation activities, see Demand.) A few representative examples of such publications would be:
  - A Guide to Champion Trees on Public Lands, presenting information already compiled by the Division of Forestry, for those interested in nature-based recreation.

- Heritage Trails, a compilation of information from TDOT, TDEC - Historical Commission, TDEC - Division of Archaeology, NPS, local governments, and Tennessee historians on historic trails and roads important to Tennessee history, and the historic sites along them.

**4.2:** All agencies that provide boating, fishing, and swimming access to lakes and rivers in Tennessee (TVA, COE, USFS, TWRA, TDEC, and TDOT) should work cooperatively to publish and distribute a guide to water access sites in Tennessee. This information should include guides to access sites for motor boat launching; put-in and take-out sites for rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing; and sites for swimming in a lake or stream.



**Fall Creek Falls State Park.**



**PROPOSAL 5:****Organize, brand and market Recreational Development Corridors.**

**5.1:** ECD should lead an initiative to develop Recreational Development Corridor plans for each of four regions: the Appalachian Mountains, the Cumberland Plateau, the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake, and the Mississippi River. These plans should be developed in cooperation with TDEC, TWRA, TDTD, TDA, the Development Districts, and the Resource Conservation and Development Councils. Active participation and input should be sought from all State, Federal and local agencies with recreation-related missions and from local business groups, non-profit organizations, and residents. The goal of these plans should be to organize, brand, and market sustainable nature-based, heritage-based, and agriculture-based recreation opportunities while protecting and preserving the recreation resources of the region. Federal designation as a National Heritage Area should be sought for one or more of these corridors.

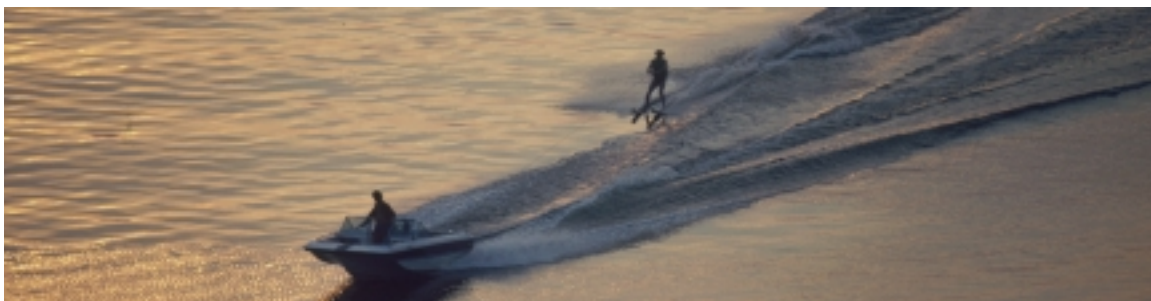
**5.2:** The Governor should direct the TRAC committee to encourage and facilitate interagency partnerships to support each of these corridor plans, and to seek ways to provide initial project funding from the State.

**5.3:** ECD should also consider the feasibility of developing two additional corridors along major interstate highways, I-81 and I-40 from Bristol to Memphis, and I-65 through Middle Tennessee, as appropriate projects for the Recreational Development Corridor concept.

**PROPOSAL 6:****Mitigate the impact of growth on Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage.**

**6.1:** The Governor should establish a Cabinet-level interagency council charged with developing growth management policies and coordinating State, Federal and local efforts to mitigate the impacts of growth on Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage. This body should represent all agencies involved in resource management and local planning assistance at the State, Federal, and local levels, including:

- Tennessee Department of Agriculture
- Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Tennessee Department of Transportation
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
- Tennessee Municipal League
- County Services Association



**Ft. Loudon Lake, TVA reservoir.**

**6.2:** This council should establish a **technical working group** composed of professionals from within their agencies to develop growth mitigation policy proposals and to provide coordinated growth planning and management assistance to local governments. This technical working group should be encouraged to coordinate their efforts with non-governmental organizations involved in regional planning and resource management.

**6.3:** This council, with the assistance of its technical working group, should identify the counties in Tennessee where the impacts of rapid urban growth and land conversion are most acute, and target special outreach initiatives to assist local government officials in these counties. This outreach program may include:

- Providing GIS capabilities to assist local officials in planning more comprehensively, including information about the county's established and potential recreation resource base.
- Providing tools and expertise for analyzing the long-range impacts of various growth scenarios.
- Providing case studies of various growth management outcomes in comparable counties that have faced similar pressures.
- Assisting in the preparation of State and Federal grant applications to help local governments address specific impacts of land conversion.
- Assisting local governments in amending their growth plans to more effectively address the issues of growth management.

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### **PROPOSAL 7:**

#### **Develop a comprehensive statewide plan for acquisition of recreation lands.**

**7.1:** TDEC and TWRA should develop a comprehensive, statewide plan for recreation land acquisition. The primary goals of this plan should be to:

- Identify specific tracts of land with an urgent need for State acquisition, including properties contiguous to existing State Parks, State Park inholdings, large timber company tracts, and properties with outstanding and threatened natural heritage features.
- Identify areas where there is a need for conservation easements or protective buffer zoning to protect parks and natural areas.
- Define the context of these proposed acquisitions, showing how they can be linked by greenways to leverage the existing supply of public lands and further the goals of a seamless Tennessee Recreation System (*see Proposal 1: Tennessee Recreation System.*)
- Identify opportunities to use alternative means of acquiring recreation lands, such as land swaps for acquisition of inholdings.

**7.2:** The Governor should provide leadership in establishing dedicated funding sources for State acquisition of recreation properties identified in the statewide acquisition plan. Options to consider may include:

- A bond issue dedicated to land acquisition.
- Renewed full funding for the Wetlands Acquisition Fund, the State Parks Acquisition Fund, the Local Parks Acquisition Fund, and the Agricultural Resources Fund.
- A State Parks Foundation to seek individual, corporate and foundation funding for acquisitions and easements to enhance and protect State Parks.

**PROPOSAL 8:**  
**Restore the State Scenic Rivers Program.**

**8.1:** TDEC should establish a Scenic Rivers Coordinator position charged with:

- Forming and managing partnerships that leverage existing resources to assist in tasks relating to the Scenic Rivers.
- Recruiting and coordinating volunteer stewards for each river.
- Negotiating riparian landowner agreements as needed to protect water quality.
- Disseminating information about the State Scenic Rivers for recreational users.
- Ensuring that each State Scenic River will provide a consistent level of quality experiences for the public and serve as a key component of the seamless Tennessee Recreation System.



Pigeon Forge. local park.

**PROPOSAL 9:**  
**Continue to implement the Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan.**

**9.1:** The Governor's Council on Greenways and Trails should reconvene and review progress toward implementing the *Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan*, make needed recommendations, and continue to provide leadership in its implementation.

**9.2:** TDEC should reinstate the Greenways and Trails Coordinator position in that department, with the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the implementation of the *Tennessee Greenways & Trails Plan*.
- Work cooperatively with **TWRA** to develop a GIS database documenting existing greenways and trails statewide and opportunities to create new ones.
- Work cooperatively with the **Tennessee Historical Commission**, the **Tennessee Wars Commission**, and the **National Park Service** to identify old wagon trails associated with Tennessee history, and add geographic data about these trails to the greenway GIS database. Priority should be given to trails of greatest national significance and greatest potential for historical heritage tourism, such as the Trail of Tears, the Great Wagon Road (Avery Trace, Walton Road), Natchez Trace, and the routes of march of troops engaged at major Civil War battles.
- Organize education and technical assistance efforts for conservation greenways and recreation trails.

**9.3:** TDEC should encourage the establishment of additional greenways and trails by local, State and Federal agencies, by the following means:

- Have **PARTAS** and the **Greenways Coordinator** assist local agencies in identifying potential

**Dogwood Art Festival, Knoxville.**

greenway/trail opportunities and train them in design guidelines and maintenance practices. This effort should include analysis of the GIS greenways data managed by TWRA to identify opportunities to create greenways and trails that will link recreation assets in the local area.

- Coordinate with other State and Federal agencies to identify opportunities to connect their recreation assets through a statewide system of greenways and trails (*see Proposal 1: Tennessee Recreation System.*)
- Coordinate with ECD to identify and pursue opportunities to acquire land for greenways through the FEMA/TEMA flood hazard mitigation program.
- Continue to place an emphasis on greenways and trails through grant programs and dedicated

funding sources. Grant programs should prioritize greenways/trails grant projects that link existing Federal, State, local parklands, and schools, provide alternate transportation and that will be an integral part in creating a statewide greenways and trails system.

- Coordinate with ECD to identify and pursue opportunities to acquire land for greenways through the FEMA/TEMA flood hazard mitigation program.
- Continue to place an emphasis on greenways and trails through grant programs and dedicated funding sources. Grant programs should prioritize greenways/trails grant projects that link existing Federal, State, local parklands, and schools, provide alternate transportation and that will be an integral part in creating a statewide greenways and trails system.
- Implement proposals of the Governor's *Off-highway Vehicle Study*. The key proposal of this study calls for new State legislation regarding off-highway vehicle trails and users which creates a dedicated State funding source for motorized trail development, management and maintenance through OHV user fees or gasoline tax revenue from off-highway vehicle use. It also proposes that the administration of this program be designated under a state agency.

**9.4:** The **TDOT Bicycle Coordinator** should continue to plan new bicycle routes and disseminate information on established bike routes in Tennessee. Further, the new TDOT multimodal study should seek to make Tennessee's roadways more accommodating to bicyclists and pedestrians, and its river crossings more accessible for paddlers.



**PROPOSAL 10:****Continue to fund and implement Tennessee's Wetlands Conservation Strategy.**

**10.1:** The Governor should continue to encourage and support the roles of TDEC and the Governor's Policy Office in leading the next phase of implementation of the Tennessee Wetlands Strategy.

**10.2:** The Governor's Policy Office should reconvene the Governor's Interagency Wetlands Committee and charge them with updating the Tennessee Wetlands Strategy during 2004. This update should include an assessment of the current status of wetlands, a review of progress toward implementing the Strategy's objectives, and recommendations for priorities during the next phase of implementation. Further, the IWC should continue to provide leadership and ongoing follow-up for implementation of the Strategy.



Reelfoot Lake.

**PROPOSAL 11:****Renovate and maintain state and local recreation facilities.**

**11.1:** Recognizing that protecting the State's investment requires an immediate solution to the State Parks renovation and maintenance backlog, the Governor's office should explore funding options for addressing the estimated \$127 million backlog of renovation and maintenance expenses in the State Parks, including \$27 million for upgrading to comply with the ADA standards.

**11.2:** TDEC-RES should give special consideration in the Grant Program's Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) to all grant applications that propose renovation and rehabilitation of existing local facilities.

**11.3:** TDEC-RES should develop a set of well-defined performance standards for grant recipients, detailing their accountability for ongoing maintenance of funded facilities, and should ensure that applicants commit to compliance with these standards before receiving funding.

**11.4:** TDEC-RES should enforce these standards by continuing the requirement that all grant applications detail the facility's projected annual maintenance costs and identify funding sources for those expenses. Grant recipients should also be required to present TDEC with annual budgets that adequately provide for ongoing maintenance. TDEC may consider using the grant recipient's eligibility for future grant funding as a compliance mechanism.

**11.5:** TDEC-RES should ensure that all local facility renovation projects funded by all grant programs will include upgrading to ADA compliance, and PARTAS should continue to provide technical assistance to local governments in meeting ADA standards.

**PROPOSAL 12****Develop an improved system for the most effective use of TDEC recreation grants.**

**12.1:** TDEC-RES and PARTAS should develop an improved system for making the most strategically effective use of recreation grants. This process may include the following strategies:

- Identify and assist locations with the most severe recreation resource deficits.
- Continue to capture new data on existing local facilities and enter this into the database of Recreation Supply which has been developed for this plan.
- Analyze the recreation supply, comparing each county's supply data with its population figures to identify the counties and communities with the most severe recreation resource deficits.
  - Provide outreach to these counties, offering them technical assistance in developing local recreation delivery systems, preparing LWCF grant applications, forming Friends groups, and securing private partnerships.
  - Create a priority or special section in the OPSP so that LWCF funds can be awarded to those cities and counties identified as having the most severe needs.
- Develop and circulate a guide to facility types ranked by cost-effectiveness.
  - Classify each type of facility according to its capital cost, annual maintenance cost and the level of participation in activities it can provide.
  - Incorporate the "Formula for New Park Maintenance" developed by TDEC to show the likely annual maintenance costs for each type of facility.

- Incorporate NSRE data on recreation activity participation by Tennesseans as one measure of the level of participation in activities each facility type can provide
- Use this guide in providing technical assistance to local governments in determining what are the most cost-effective facility types they can build.
- Use the recreation grants scoring system (OPSP) to encourage State Parks and local governments to make the most of what they already have by assigning priorities to projects that:
  - Meet the criteria of ECD's new Governor's Recognition of Economic Achievement in Tennessee (GREAT) program,
  - Leverage and link with existing recreation resources in the Tennessee Recreation System: Federal, State, and local parks and greenways
  - Use public/private partnerships and intergovernmental multi-use agreements (*see Proposal 2: Multi-use Agreements.*)
  - Renovate or rehabilitate current facilities and park areas (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*)



Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park.

**PROPOSAL 13:****Establish a statewide environmental education program.**

**13.1:** The Governor should establish a Tennessee Environmental Education Advisory Council and charge this body with preparing and implementing a coordinated statewide Environmental Education Master Plan. This council should include representatives of the Department of Education, TDEC-State Parks, TWRA, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Environmental Education Association, the Tennessee Forestry Association, Austin Peay State University Environmental Education Center, MTSU Center for Environmental Education, the Tennessee Conservation League, and career educators in the field. A key provision of the Environmental Education Master Plan should be the reinstatement of Project CENTS or a similar program within the Tennessee Department of Education.

**13.2:** TDEC - State Parks should maintain the high priority it has now placed on interpretive programming by providing staff training in natural resource interpretation. This training should include material concerning the special interpretive needs of

ethnic and minority populations and of children and families who may have had little or no exposure to the natural outdoor environment.

**13.3:** PARTAS, in its technical assistance to local communities, should encourage environmental education by helping to coordinate community efforts, including school/parks cooperative agreements.

**13.4:** TDEC-RES should assign a priority in grant scoring to applicants who have developed plans to use their park facilities to support environmental education programming.

**13.5:** The Governor should seek to provide adequate funding for the *Tennessee Conservationist* magazine.

**13.6:** The TRAC committee should in future include one or more members of the environmental education profession to assist in that body's follow-up role in implementing this Action Program (*see Proposal 17: Follow-up.*)

**13.7:** TDTD should include links to all of Tennessee's nature centers on the proposed recreation one-stop website (*see Proposal 3: Recreation One-stop website.*)



Reelfoot Lake State Resort Park.

**PROPOSAL 14:****Increase advocacy and funding for parks and conservation in Tennessee.**

**14.1:** The Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association, in association with the MTSU Recreation & Leisure Services Department and other partners, should undertake a comprehensive assessment of the total economic value of the benefits, both direct and indirect, that parks and recreation provide to Tennessee. Areas for this assessment to consider may include:

- Recreation- and tourism-related economic development impacts, including park visitation, hunting and fishing, water-based activities, heritage-oriented activities, and recreation-related special events,
- Employee productivity impacts,
- Real estate value impacts,



Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

- Corporate recruitment impacts,
- Public health impacts,
- Impacts on rates of crime and incarceration,
- Impacts on rates of self-destructive activities among young people.

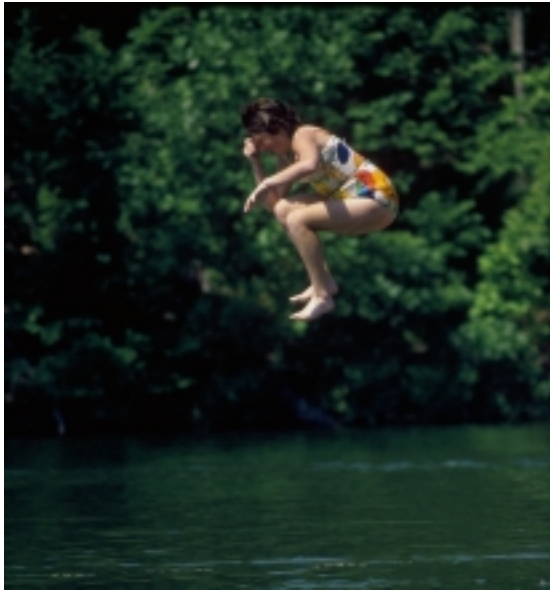
**14.2:** TDEC and TRPA should actively disseminate the findings of this benefits assessment to legislators, local government officials, and the general public.

**14.3:** The Governor's office should undertake research into successful measures to provide dedicated funding for parks in other states, and should consider the establishment of dedicated funding sources for parks in Tennessee. Such funding may be considered in conjunction with efforts to provide funding for the backlog of renovation and maintenance in the State Parks (*see Proposal 11: Renovate and Maintain.*) Possible options may include:

- Full funding for the Local Parks and Recreation Fund,
- A tax on recreation-related equipment,
- Dedication of one penny of the state gasoline tax for parks and recreation,
- A state bond issue for State Parks renovation,
- A State Parks Foundation established to raise an endowment for State Parks from corporate, foundation, and private donors.

**14.4:** TDEC, PARTAS, and MTSU should develop an institute to provide continuing education training for parks and recreation professionals.



**Montgomery Bell State Park.*****PROPOSAL 15:*****Define and maintain continuity of Parks and Conservation policies.**

**15.1:** The leadership of TDEC, in consultation with the **Governor**, should consider dividing the department's two basic functions - environmental regulation and parks and conservation - into two separate departments. If this division is implemented, consideration should be given to establishing an advisory or policy board to help define and maintain continuity of parks and conservation policies.

**Cumberland Plateau near Monterey.**

**PROPOSAL 16:****Make greater use of volunteers and Friends groups to support local, State and Federal parks.**

**16.1:** TDEC-State Parks should support their new **Friends Coordinator** in providing administrative assistance to friends groups statewide and in implementing the following goals:

- Establish a Friends group for every State Park.
- Develop a friends website containing helpful information for Friends groups.
- Conduct training workshops on such topics as resolution of conflicts with park managers, grant writing, forming corporate partnerships, and community fundraising.
- Publish a quarterly Friends of State Parks newsletter to disseminate information useful to these groups.

**16.2:** TDEC-State Parks should strengthen their volunteer outreach efforts, connecting people



**Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.**

with opportunities to offer volunteer services to the parks, by the following means:

- Develop a parks volunteer website.
- Establish statewide database of volunteers to better match their time, talents and energy to specific projects & programs.
- Communicate the importance of and need for volunteers through press releases, newspaper advertisements, e-mails, the volunteer website, and articles.
- Coordinate and partner with organizations such as friends groups, constituency groups, environmental groups, foundations, businesses, schools, and youth groups.
- Recruit and train volunteers and recognize volunteers for their contributions.

**16.3:** TDEC should ensure that information on volunteering opportunities is available on each State Park web page, as well as contact information for a Friends group, if one exists for the park.

**16.4:** TDEC-RES and PARTAS should strengthen their technical assistance tools to support the establishment of friends groups and volunteer programs for local parks. These tools may include publications about volunteer outreach, model volunteer programs, model friends groups, etc. These tools should be made available to local governments and other agencies on the TDEC-RES website. PARTAS should also conduct training and information sessions through TRPA schools and workshops and through TDEC when necessary.

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**PROPOSAL 17:**  
**Follow-up on the Action Program of this  
Tennessee State Recreation Plan.**

**17.1:** The TRAC committee should meet at least once annually in the years 2004-2008 to monitor the progress in implementing this Action Program by all parties, identify barriers that need to be overcome, develop any new recommendations that may be warranted, issue an annual assessment report, and encourage continued coordination and cooperation among the involved agencies.

**17.2:** TDEC should continue to provide liaison and organizational support for the TRAC.

**17.3:** The Governor should continue to include diverse representation in the TRAC membership, including the addition of representatives of the environmental education profession (*see Proposal 13: Environmental Education*), development districts, local governing bodies, private providers, and related non-profit groups (*see Proposal 1: Seamless Recreation System*).

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**PROPOSAL 18:**  
**Provide organized health and fitness  
opportunities for target groups.**

**18.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should work in partnership with the **Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health** to help local communities conduct Active Communities assessment surveys.

**18.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should help local governments develop outreach programs targeted at population groups most affected by high levels of inactivity: youth, seniors, minorities, and rural residents. This outreach effort should include developing local, State and Federal partnerships to provide more recreation programs for these population groups, including assistance from the **Tennessee Department of Education**, the **Commission on Aging**, and other agencies with access to the target groups.



The Great Stone Door, South Cumberland State Park.

***PROPOSAL 19:*****Support the ability of local governments to deliver quality recreation programming.**

**19.1:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should continue to provide support for local recreation program planning efforts by the following means:

- Developing a Technical Assistance newsletter distributed through a website.
- Continuing to develop technical bulletins on topics relating to various program delivery elements.
- Promoting Benefits-Based-Programming of parks and recreation services.
- Improving communication through surveys, e-mails, a web site, etc.
- Making local governments more aware of the PARTAS services available to them.

**19.2:** TDEC-RES-PARTAS should facilitate the role of recreation providers in youth drug use prevention by the following means:

- Representing Tennessee's recreation providers on the board of the **Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of Tennessee (CADCAT)**.
- Facilitating the formation of partnerships between local recreation providers and community anti-drug coalitions.
- Assisting CADCAT in providing prevention training to local recreation providers.
- Facilitating prevention training for State Parks personnel.

**Local tennis center.**

